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(HANSARD)

Tuesday, January 31, 2017
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of the committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 18th report later this day.

* * *

CANADA EVIDENCE ACT

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-334, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code (journalistic sources).

He said: Mr. Speaker, when our media are under surveillance, when our journalists can no longer be sure that their sources will be confidential, when issuing a surveillance order becomes a simple, routine formality, democracy loses.

The Lagacé affair was a real shock for many. The truth is that a number of journalists can no longer guarantee that their dealings with their sources will be confidential, because they no longer know who is being spied on, why they are being spied on, who is spying on them, and for how long they have been spied on. That is why today we are introducing a bill that will considerably limit the ability to compel a journalist, knowingly or not, to communicate information that is likely to compromise the identity of a source.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 18th report of the Standing

Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the Order for the consideration of report stage of Bill C-227, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (community benefit), standing in the Order of Precedence on the Order Paper, be discharged and the Bill be withdrawn; that Motion M-109, standing in the Order of Precedence on the Order Paper, be withdrawn; that the recorded division currently scheduled to be held immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business on Wednesday, February 1, 2017, and any further recorded divisions deferred to that day pursuant to Standing Order 93 or 98, be held instead at an expiry of the time provided for the Government Orders that day; and that, immediately following the taking of any deferred recorded divisions that day, the House shall begin adjournment proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary 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.

Speaker's Ruling

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

(Bill C-227. On the Order: Private Members' Bills:)

December 5, 2016—Bill C-227, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (community benefit)—Mr. Ahmed Hussen

(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)

* * *

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

(Motion No. 109. On the Order: Private Members' Business:)

December 5, 2016—That the Standing Committee on Finance be instructed to undertake a study that would (a) examine the possibility and practicality of (i) building on the success of the Canadian Revenue Agency's (CRA) auto-fill feature by further automating the tax filing process with the goal of achieving the ability of complete tax automation, (ii) offering to all Canadians the option of filing their taxes via a free, online T-1 tax form directly on the CRA "My Account" webpage or other secure format; (b) identify and examine the current cultural and institutional barriers that impede citizens from filing their taxes and thus from fully collecting their benefits; and that the Committee present its findings and recommendations to the House no later than one year from the adoption of this motion, provided that in its report, the Committee shall (i) explain the steps needed to implement these practices, as well as their advantages and disadvantages, (ii) highlight privacy, data security, and potential changes to the tax-code necessary to facilitate further automation, (iii) identify the prospective savings for Canadians in both time and money.—Mr. Andrew Leslie

(Motion withdrawn)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, if you were to canvass the House you will find that there would be unanimous agreement for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during the debate tonight pursuant to Standing Order 52, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary 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

HOME CHILDREN

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to offer an unequivocal, sincere, and public apology to those home children, or children

migrants, who died while being ashamed of their history and deprived of their family; to the living and elderly home children who continue to bear the weight of their past; and to the descendants of home children who continue to feel the void passed down through the generations while continuing to search out relatives lost as a result of a system that in many instances victimized them under the guise of protection.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stay at the Noelville Family Resort in Noelville, Ontario, which is located on the quiet shores of Bear Lake in the riding of Nickel Belt.

The petitioners call on the government to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time, year-round employees be continued to be recognized as small businesses and taxed as small businesses.

* * *

●(1010)

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 it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: On November 30, 2016, the hon. House leader of the official opposition raised a point of order concerning the use of the motion to proceed to orders of the day during routine proceedings on that day. At the time, I ruled the motion in order and proceeded to put the question and committed to return to the House with a more substantive ruling, which I am now prepared to do.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. House leader of the official opposition for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the hon. member for Victoria, and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for their comments.

[*English*]

The House leader of the official opposition objected to this motion being moved during routine proceedings since it had the effect of superseding the remaining rubrics in routine proceedings, a proceeding which she characterized as an essential part of House business that needs to be protected. In doing so, she decried what she called the government's misuse of this procedure.

Government Orders

Citing two rulings by Speaker Fraser on November 24, 1986, and April 14, 1987, she asked the Chair to intervene to find the motion out of order until such time as the government could demonstrate that unreasonable obstruction by the opposition necessitated its use.

[*Translation*]

In response, the hon. parliamentary secretary countered that the motion to proceed to orders of the day was, in fact, in order and consistent with the rules of the House. The motion, “That the House do now proceed to the Orders of the Day”, is what is defined as, quote, “A superseding motion designed to dispose of the original question before the House, either for the time being or permanently.”

Such motions have been moved in recent years with some frequency by both the government and the opposition. In fact, as was the case on November 30, examples can be found of such motions being moved during routine proceedings and on a Wednesday, as well as prior to the moving of a motion for time allocation or the consideration of a bill subject to time allocation.

[*English*]

The issue then is whether its use on November 30 was procedurally appropriate; that is, was it used within the strict confines of the rules and practices of the House. The opposition House leader suggested that it was not. She cited rulings by Speaker Fraser from 1986 and 1987 in support of her contention.

While all Speaker's rulings constitute an important point of reference in the adjudication of matters before the House, they must always be examined in the context of their era. Routine proceedings in 1986 and 1987 was conducted in a completely different order of rubrics and the circumstances of the time were vastly different. Even so, it is notable that a motion moved on November 24, 1986 to proceed to the orders of the day during routine proceedings was found to be in order by the Chair.

[*Translation*]

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, states on page 541:

The motion “That the House do now proceed to the Orders of the Day” may be moved by any Member prior to the calling of Orders of the Day.... The Chair has ruled that a motion to proceed to the Orders of the Day is in order during Routine Proceedings which, in recent practice, is the only time that it has been proposed.

● (1015)

[*English*]

I have also considered whether, as the opposition House leader contends, such situations require the intervention of the Speaker to determine if a bill or motion has received sufficient debate. My predecessor clearly indicated in a ruling on November 26, 2014, at page 9830 of *Debates* that “it is not for the Speaker to judge whether an issue has been sufficiently debated”. I share that view. It is not within the purview of the Speaker to express a view on whether the duration of debate has been appropriate on a measure before the House. Accordingly, it is clear to the Chair that the procedural exigencies were met when the government moved a motion to proceed to the orders of the day during routine proceedings. I can therefore confirm that the motion was in order.

[*Translation*]

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin debate today on Bill C-37 to address a serious and pressing public health matter, to improve public safety, and to protect the health of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

I am eager to work with all the MPs to help advance this important bill, in particular with my new parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

[*English*]

This legislation is introduced in the context where Canada is facing a national public health crisis related to opioids, characterized by ever-increasing rates of harm, overdose, and death.

The opioid crisis raises many concerns, and the one we hear about perhaps most often is the rapid rise in the numbers of deaths from accidental overdose. Last year, in British Columbia alone, more than 900 people died from overdose. That is an 80% increase from 2015. The majority were linked to the swift spread of powerful drugs like fentanyl. Alas, the situation is getting worse. Last week it was reported that there were 20,000 overdoses in British Columbia alone. At a national level, deaths from overdoses are now more numerous than deaths caused by motor vehicle accidents.

[*Translation*]

Before I continue, I would like to extend my condolences to the families and friends who have lost a loved one. We share their grief. We are aware of the pressing need to turn the tide of this crisis as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

I would also comment at the outset that while the focus of the legislation is on immediate action to address the opioid crisis, we must bear in mind that lasting solutions require an understanding of the roots of the opioid crisis, which are messy, but not mysterious. It should be acknowledged, for example, that pain is a central theme at the heart of the drug crisis. Sometimes, problematic drug use begins with physical pain, but we must also admit that emotional pain is a factor in substance use. To fully resolve the opioid crisis we must address the multiple social drivers, including poverty, social isolation, childhood trauma, sexual abuse, and mental illness.

Government Orders

Addressing the roots of the crisis demands a whole of society response. It means calling out stigma and discrimination as barriers to accessing care. It means building a society where children receive tender attention and adults are not isolated and lonely. It means an international search for effective answers and being willing to discuss bold policy alternatives and the evidence associated with them. We must deal with this crisis comprehensively, collaboratively, and compassionately. We must assess what works and what does not work, and then we must do what works.

The crisis is moving eastward in Canada, with more drug seizures of fentanyl and carfentanyl.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are increasingly aware that problematic substance abuse spares no one—people of all ages and from all socio-economic groups—and that it has devastating consequences on individuals, families, and communities.

• (1020)

[*English*]

In the past year, I have met with bereaved parents, people who use drugs, first responders, addiction specialists, mental health experts, indigenous leaders, health educators, and others to learn their perspective on the challenges we face. A complex, multi-dimensional social challenge of this nature demands timely, coordinated, and effective action.

Before I discuss the details of this proposed legislation, I would like to thank many members of this House who have been outspoken on the urgent need to respond together. I thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for his support and advocacy on the issue, and especially for his calls to pass this legislation by unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Health. Its members are actively working on this issue, and they made a series of recommendations that we reviewed carefully. We have acted on that. I look forward to responding formally to the committee report in due course.

[*English*]

There are many important components of this proposed legislation that would support communities and enhance public health and public safety when it comes to the use of drugs and substances. Bill C-37 would save lives. It needs to be passed without delay.

At this point, please permit me to outline some of the federal actions to date on the matter.

Early last year we made naloxone, the antidote to overdose, available without prescription. We arranged an expedited review of naloxone nasal spray and ensured an emergency supply for Canadians.

We granted an exemption to the Dr. Peter Centre in Vancouver to operate Canada's second supervised consumption site, along with an unprecedented four-year renewal of the exemption for Insite in Vancouver.

Last summer, we announced Health Canada's opioid action plan to improve education for the public and prescribers, to expand access to treatment, and to build the database.

In September, we overturned a ban on the use of prescription heroin, so that it is available to treat the most severe cases of addiction.

Our government has supported the good Samaritan overdose act to remove the fear of drug possession charges for individuals who call 911 when they witness an overdose.

We added regulations to schedule fentanyl precursors as controlled substances, making it harder for illicit substances to be manufactured in Canada.

[*Translation*]

In November, along with the Ontario Minister of Health, Eric Hoskins, I hosted a national conference and summit on opioids, which led to a joint statement of action to address the opioid crisis. That statement includes 128 separate commitments made by Health Canada, nine provincial or territorial health departments, and over 30 other organizations. In February we will provide Canadians with an update on the progress made so far regarding those commitments.

[*English*]

In work led by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, the RCMP now has an agreement with China to combat the flow of illicit fentanyl.

Because this is a national crisis, we activated additional supports. In collaboration with the provinces and territories, we have established a special advisory committee on illicit opioids that includes the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health to advance information among jurisdictions related to the opioid crisis.

We have built a task force within the federal health portfolio to work with other federal departments in a comprehensive response to the crisis. We funded McMaster University to produce new evidence-based guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain. They are now available for consultation.

We funded the Canadian research initiative in substance misuse to provide evidence-based guidelines for medication-assisted treatment; and with the support of the Prime Minister, we identified new federal funding of \$5 billion over the next 10 years to address mental health and addictions. We know that untreated mental illness is a common cause of addiction, and early intervention is key.

We introduced the new Canadian drugs and substances strategy, to reinstate harm reduction as a pillar in Canadian drug policy and return the lead for drug policy to the Minister of Health.

Government Orders

In December, I introduced Bill C-37, which proposes to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and other acts. This legislative framework is an important part of our comprehensive approach to drug policy. It aims to accomplish three important goals: one, to provide support for harm reduction, in particular the establishment of supervised consumption sites; two, to reduce the supply of illicit substances; and three, to reduce the risk of diversion of other legitimate controlled substances.

Evidence shows that, when properly established and maintained, supervised consumption sites in communities that want and need them will save lives and improve health without increasing drug use or crime rates.

Last year, I visited Insite in Vancouver to witness the important work it does to help vulnerable people and communities. I was moved by what I saw. Facilities like Insite promote health-seeking behaviour by introducing people who use drugs to the health system in a non-judgmental and non-stigmatizing manner. They have hygienic facilities and sterile equipment, and are supervised by qualified health professionals who provide advice on harm reduction and treatment options as well as prevention of overdose.

Under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Minister of Health has the ability to provide exemptions to allow supervised consumption sites, but the Respect for Communities Act from the previous government introduced unnecessarily onerous requirements that must be met by communities before the Minister of Health could even respond to the request for an exemption.

We have heard desperate cries for help from communities most affected by the opioid crisis. They have indicated that the current requirements are burdensome and hinder their ability to offer services needed to reduce harm and to save lives. Currently there are applications being reviewed by Health Canada from across the country from communities such as Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.

Proposed legislation would simplify and streamline the application process for communities that want and need to establish supervised consumption sites. It would replace the current 26 application criteria with the five factors outlined in the Supreme Court of Canada 2011 decision regarding Insite. In fact, the criteria in the proposed legislation are exactly those written in paragraph 153 of the Supreme Court decision.

A vital criterion that Bill C-37 retains is the requirement for community consultation. It would improve transparency by adding a requirement for decisions on applications to be made public, including reasons for denial.

To support these proposed changes, Health Canada would post new information online about what is required in applications, how to process works, and the status of applications.

● (1025)

[*Translation*]

To help keep opioids and other illicit substances off the street in Canada, we need to make sure that they are not easy to produce. To that end, the bill proposes to prohibit the unregistered importation of pill presses and encapsulators. This measure has been included in

part because certain jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, have asked for it. While it is true that those devices do have legitimate uses, they can also be used to manufacture counterfeit drugs that contain dangerous substances, including fentanyl.

[*English*]

This legislation would also give Canada Border Services officers greater flexibility to inspect suspicious mail, no matter the size, that may contain goods that are prohibited, controlled, or regulated. Protecting the privacy of Canadians is of the utmost importance. The measure would only be for incoming international mail where the prevalence of illicit drugs is greater. In fact, just one standard size mail envelope can contain 30 grams of fentanyl, enough to cause 15,000 overdoses.

[*Translation*]

Lastly, the bill updates a number of provisions regarding compliance and enforcement of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act in order to modernize that piece of legislation. These legislative measures allow over 600 licensed dealers to manufacture, purchase, sell, distribute, import, export, and transport controlled substances for legitimate purposes.

The proposed amendments will allow Health Canada inspectors to conduct inspections in a variety of situations, especially in any location where it is suspected that any activities involving controlled substances are taking place. These amendments will help prevent the diversion of controlled substances to the illegal market.

● (1030)

[*English*]

Bill C-37 supports our government's new Canadian drugs and substances strategy, which the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and I announced on December 12. In the past, federal drug strategies aimed to balance public health and public safety objectives through key pillars of prevention, treatment, enforcement, and at times, harm reduction; but in 2006, under the national anti-drug strategy of the previous government, the harm reduction pillar was removed. Our government will pursue an evidence-based approach to drug policy. Accordingly, this new strategy would formally reinstate harm reduction as a key pillar, in addition to prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

It should be noted that the reintroduction of harm reduction does not diminish the importance of the other pillars. In particular, we must not let up on our efforts for prevention and treatment. I will continue to encourage the expansion of access to a broad range of treatment options, which are essential to reducing the number of overdose deaths. In reframing problematic substance use as the public health issue that it is, it returns the lead to the Minister of Health from the Minister of Justice.

Government Orders

In conclusion, the opioid crisis has taken a toll on many communities across Canada. It requires swift action, as well as a more balanced approach to deal with problematic substance use. Our renewed evidence-based approach would allow the government to better protect Canadians, save lives, and address the root causes of this crisis. Canada needs this action now.

While our focus must be on the current crisis, we must also pursue a balanced approach over the long term to address the upstream causes of problematic substance use.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to work with our partners, including the provinces, territories, municipalities, and indigenous communities.

[*English*]

While we cannot end this crisis immediately, we can markedly reduce its impact and set ourselves on a path to health for all. Measures proposed in Bill C-37 aim to take swift action to address the opioid crisis. I call on hon. members of the House to support the passage of Bill C-37 without delay.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister about the current injection site application requirements versus the proposed requirements. For example, the current requirements explicitly state, as far as consultation is concerned, that there needs to be the provincial health minister's opinion, the provincial public safety minister's opinion, the local government's opinion, letters from the head of the police force in the area, letters from health professionals in relation to public health, and consultations with professional licensing authorities for physicians and nurses.

In addition, they require that the public have 90 days after the day on which notice is given to provide the minister with comments. The current bill states that there is only a need to have an expression of community support or opposition, and that is about it.

It further states that the minister may give notice, and it indicates a period of time not to exceed 90 days in which members of the public may provide the minister with comments. Therefore, under the new regulations, theoretically, a one-day consultation would suffice, and as long as one advocacy group was in favour, the minister would approve the site.

I am wondering if the minister could clarify what she means by community and community consultation.

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for his acknowledgement of the seriousness of this crisis.

When it comes to making decisions about supervised consumption sites, consultation with communities is absolutely essential. I hear from communities almost every day, people who are living in places like the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver and communities like Victoria. The member for Victoria is here today.

If members speak to people who go into these communities and speak to business owners, first responders, and law enforcement officials, they will hear their cries of desperation. These communities are saying that people are dying in their streets and that they need to find a way to save people's lives.

Of course the community has to be consulted. There will always be questions, and they are absolutely legitimate. What Bill C-37 allows is for the Minister of Health to be able to make a reasonable decision and to make sure that all the appropriate people are consulted. Communities are desperately crying out for these kinds of facilities to be available. We have deep, abundant scientific evidence that they save lives, and we have seen that in communities where they have been introduced, the public has in fact come to see that they are highly effective in allowing public safety and making sure that people are safely introduced to the public health system.

• (1035)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear the minister acknowledge the comprehensive roots and causes of substance use disorders. I agree with her, very much, that addiction is a complex psychosocial disease. I think we all agree in this House that addiction is, first and foremost, a health issue.

Taking all of these facts together, it is clear that we need to provide Canadians with a full range of treatment options if we are really to help people recover, if we are really going to stop overdoses, and if we are really going to reduce the deaths being caused in cities across this country.

However, it is also a fact, and I think the minister knows this, that there is a shocking lack of detox and treatment facilities in this country that are publicly available, affordable, and free. A lot of families want to get help for a family member. It costs \$10,000 or \$20,000 a month to access treatment. It takes an average of eight days in British Columbia to access detox. We all know that with addiction, if someone does not get into treatment today, they may not be ready tomorrow.

Will the minister assure this House that in the upcoming budget, there will be significant new federal funding to help create detox and treatment facilities for Canadians across this country, which is the only real way to actually deal with this health issue?

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that the member for Vancouver Kingsway has raised this matter. He is absolutely right that harm reduction alone will not solve the opioid crisis. It requires a range of pillars, and that includes access to treatment.

I would absolutely agree with the member that there is a tragic shortage of treatment facilities in this country. When I speak to mayors of big cities, people who work in emergency departments, and people who are first responders, they decry the fact that people can have their lives saved, but then they go back out onto the streets. They need treatment.

When those people need treatment and are ready for treatment, they should have access to treatment. That is why I am very pleased that we were able to offer to the provinces and territories \$5 billion in new money for mental health and addictions. I certainly hope that my colleagues, the ministers of health, particularly in the provinces where this is the greatest challenge, will use some of those resources to expand access to treatment facilities so that people will be able to get, possibly, opioid substitution therapy, for example, and will be able to have their social issues addressed and live healthy lives.

Government Orders

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for looking at this issue and understanding the complexities of it.

I have some questions. If we go back to 1996, the treatment for opioid dependency was the methadone program. As the years have gone by, and you have not mentioned that program—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the chair and not the individual member.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Madam Speaker, today we see the abuse that program has undergone. We can look at the sale of prescriptions for methadone. We can look at the people using methadone, along with other drugs.

I am just wondering if the minister can speak to the review of that program and the costs it has borne over the years to end up with the results we see today.

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to answer this question, which raises again the issue of treatment, which is clearly an important part of the response to the opioid crisis. The member raises the issue of medication-assisted therapy, and that includes opioid substitution therapy, products like methadone and another product called buprenorphine/naloxone, which is also known as Suboxone. These are absolutely essential parts of the solution to the opioid crisis. People who have been identified as having a severe addiction are in many cases, unfortunately, accessing drugs that are laced with much more powerful drugs, like fentanyl, and that is causing many of the overdose deaths.

We are looking to work with provinces, territories, and communities including indigenous communities, to make sure that treatment options are available. There are challenges in accessing some of these opioid substitution therapies across the country. There are challenges with cost. There are challenges with making sure that prescribers can use them in a proper way. However, we know, and I know from having talked to the parents of people who are suffering with problematic substance use, that they want their children to be able to access these kinds of treatments and to find good health.

• (1040)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the break I had an opportunity to meet with a friend of mine who is a firefighter in Niagara. I asked him how work was going, and he said that it was terrible. He was going from call to call with the opioid crisis and overdoses.

We hear a lot about the opioid crisis related to British Columbia, but my question for the hon. Minister of Health is how the government is going to address this issue from coast to coast to coast.

Hon. Jane Philpott: Madam Speaker, I am very grateful for this question. It does emphasize the tremendous toll this places on first responders in many of the cities across the country, and even in rural areas. It is heartbreaking for them to see people die of overdoses and to have to try to get to them to respond.

The member also raises the matter that there is a shortage of good data, and that is one of the things I am very concerned about. In fact, it has been raised by the health committee and others.

We have tasked the chief public health officer of this country to work with the medical officers of health across the country, with Stats Canada, and with the Canadian Institute for Health Information to find a way, and I will continue to push on this, to get access to good, rapid, up-to-date data across the country so that we can recognize where there are pockets of substance use challenges that are not adequately being addressed.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to finally get the opportunity to rise in the House to debate bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

I think all members of the House and all Canadians would agree that the ongoing opioid crisis is absolutely tragic. I know that the Premier of British Columbia and a few of our colleagues from B.C. have asked the minister to issue a national public health emergency as the overdose numbers continue to rise in the province.

This is a very complex issue. There is not just one solution.

I was fortunate to have been part of the opioid study recently conducted at the health committee. It allowed me, and I think all my colleagues on the committee, to truly learn and empathize with struggling addicts, communities, first nation health professions, and families that have had to endure an opioid-related death.

We had the opportunity to hear many first-hand stories, something that I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of. We heard from parents who lost their children. We heard from recovered drug addicts, government officials, and the first responders who are reviving these people hourly. We sometimes seem so focused on those battling drug addictions that we forget about the first responders who are working so hard to ensure that our streets and our citizens are safe.

I would like to personally thank everyone who appeared as a witness. I truly believe that their testimony has played a huge role in encouraging all levels of government and Canadians to work together, and of course, to take action.

With that, I would now like to get to the bill itself.

The bill aims to achieve five main things. First, it would grant increased powers to the Canada Border Services Agency. Second, it would regulate the importation of unregistered devices, such as pill presses. Third, it would increase prohibitions against certain actions related to controlled substances. Fourth, it would give the minister authority to temporarily schedule and control new dangerous substances. Fifth, it would streamline the application process for approving and opening supervised injection sites.

We know that there are many factors that have contributed to the opioid crisis. While one cause of the crisis results from illegal substances and organized crime, many are battling addiction because of the over-prescribing of painkillers.

Government Orders

This bill seeks to address one aspect of the crisis: illegal activities and organized crime. I look forward to seeing what measures will be taken to address prescription drugs and over-prescribing, as I think we must acknowledge that it is a key contributor as well.

We know that China has been a primary source of fentanyl, carfentanil, and other dangerous opioids. It has been reported over the last year, and by the CBSA itself, how easy it is to import illicit substances into Canada with the current regulations.

My Conservative colleagues have been pushing the government to finally acknowledge the flaws at our borders and grant officers the authority to search and seize suspicious packages weighing less than 30 grams. While border agents already intercept dozens of these packages, exporters have found a way to hide illegal substances in toys, silica packages, and products that ultimately could not be searched without permission. Removing the “30 grams or less” exemption from the Customs Act is a much-needed step in combatting the opioid crisis facing our country.

Another weakness that has been recognized by many of my colleagues, but most passionately by Senator Vern White, is the need to target devices, specifically pill presses. These devices are capable of turning out thousands of deadly pills per hour, and under the current law, anyone can import one legally. That is not okay.

Abbotsford Police Deputy Chief Mike Serr stated:

Right now, they are not regulated and the importation of them—there really is very little from an intelligence perspective the police can do.... To have these machines registered would be at least one step for us.... We could then have a better sense for ensuring they are for legitimate purposes.

Again, granting the Canada Border Services Agency the authority to detain unregistered pill presses is something that must be done. It is important that all information obtained at the border be available to law enforcement agencies across the country so that they can take the appropriate steps in ensuring the safety of all citizens. Ultimately, that is what we are trying to ensure here: that all Canadians are protected and that access to illicit, dangerous substances is avoided any way possible.

That is what I find quite contradictory. The government is so quick to encourage the approval of supervised injection sites. Injection sites are known to give access to illicit and dangerous drugs, yet the government appears to want more of them. This is where there are some major inconsistencies in the government's policies.

• (1045)

The minister's mandate letter states, “Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. I expect that our work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians”. Yet, the bill would severely weaken the Respect for Communities Act, which was put in place to ensure that feedback from Canadians was taken into consideration before a supervised injection site was approved.

Under the previous Conservative government, we took steps to ensure there was a robust consultation process which included residents, local law enforcement agencies, and elected officials to be on board with an injection site in their community. Bill C-37 proposes to significantly change those requirements. While the

expression of community support for opposition is a requirement, the specific requirements have been removed to allow the Liberals to easily change them as they see fit. This is a way to completely avoid parliamentary oversight. The minister's attempt to avoid community approval will fail.

We heard from numerous witnesses in the health committee that an injection site could not be successful without the support of the entire community. I will use the city of Ottawa as an example.

The mayor, the chief of police, and the former chief of police all have openly stated that they are opposed to an injection site in their community. Yet, under this bill, there is no assurance their views would even be taken into consideration. The minister has given herself the power to approve a site, regardless. What the minister does not realize is that not all communities want injection sites. Usually there are a few advocacy groups that are in support of a site, and no other legitimate stakeholder.

The Prime Minister's own parliamentary secretary for justice stated, “They have been doing it in Vancouver for some years and there have been issues that have arisen there. I don't know of any place in Toronto where that couldn't have a significant negative impact on the communities.”

The Liberals are using harm reduction strategies as temporary solutions, band-aid solutions, and are refusing to offer any long-term solutions such as treatment and prevention. This is concerning.

In the minister's mandate letter, the Prime Minister states, “When Canadians are in good physical and mental health, they are able to work better, be more productive, and contribute more fully to our economy while living healthier, happier lives”. I agree with this statement, which is why injection sites should not become the norm. These sites are not helping people become productive. They are not encouraging good physical and mental health; in fact, they are doing the complete opposite. All injection sites are doing is providing a safe place for addicts to get their fix and if they overdose, someone will revive them. This is not a life. Injection sites do not save lives. They revive people who, from what I have heard from meeting with many recovered addicts over the year, do not want to be alive if drugs, crime, and overdosing is all they have to look forward to.

The parliamentary secretary for justice also said, “the ambiguous messaging that comes out from a society that says you can't use these drugs, they're against the law — but if you do, we'll provide a place [for you] to do it in.” This is exactly the type of conflicting message Canadians do not want children to be raised with. Drugs are dangerous. They are illegal because they ruin lives.

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The Prime Minister and the Liberal Party are simply building a co-dependent relationship with drug addicts. To elaborate on what I mean, a co-dependent relationship is a dysfunctional relationship in which one party enables and supports another's addiction such as drugs. That is what the Liberals want society to become: an enabler as opposed to a preventer.

The president of the Canadian Police Association, Tom Stamatakis, said, "We should be treating addiction as a health issue and if harm reduction is part of a holistic approach to dealing with this issue, there should be a treatment pillar that focuses ultimately on how we get people away from engaging in harmful activities."

Injection sites simply provide a place for drug users to get high, but offer no treatment. I will use Insite as an example.

In 2015, 6,531 people visited the injection site and only 464 were referred to Insite, the site's apparent detox treatment centre. Only seven per cent were referred to or offered detox treatment at Insite. To elaborate on the statistics, when I went for a visit, I was basically told by an employee that it was not in the business of treating these people. The site was there to provide them with needles and ensure that they would wake up. These sites are not saving lives; they are enabling and giving up on people whose lives have taken a bad turn.

The government's desire to quickly approve these sites without community support, especially law enforcement, is absolutely outrageous.

• (1050)

We cannot support the government's attempt to improve these dangerous enabling sites without knowing and being assured that residents, law enforcement, and elected officials are 100% on board.

Once the minister approves the site, the responsibility to ensure the safety of all residents rests in the hands of local police. Crime rates do not drop as the government keeps stating. Addicts are still illegally obtaining these drugs through break-ins, robberies, prostitution, etc. As Toronto Police Association president Mike McCormack said, "They're (VPD) seeing more of what we'd call street disorder—more people using drugs on the street, smoking drugs, congregating, minor thefts."

I worry about my community of Oshawa. Oshawa is an up-and-coming area with many new businesses and new residential areas for families to settle into. Oshawa and Durham region continue to work to improve the crime rates, and we have seen a drastic decline in assault, robberies, and drug crimes since 2009. This is thanks to the community as a whole working together to make it a better and safer place to raise our families. I worry that the approval of an injection site in my riding would lead to people looking for somewhere else to live, which ultimately would negatively affect these thriving businesses. It would cause alarm if local residents, the mayor, and local police were not consulted prior to an approval. This is something my local community would not be in favour of, and that is why I cannot support this portion of the bill.

Another issue we heard quite a bit about throughout the opioid study was the fact that new dangerous and deadly substances were constantly being made. This causes serious concerns. As the current rules stand, new psychoactive substances that are designed to mimic

illegal drugs are chemically different enough not to be considered illegal.

I was happy to see that that the bill proposed to grant the Minister of Health the authority to temporarily and quickly schedule and control a new and dangerous substance under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. This will allow the minister to take immediate action for the public good, while launching a thorough review of the new substance. This means action is being taken while a decision on whether to permanently schedule the substance is warranted.

I think all members agree that the opioid crisis must be addressed. I also think that all members are in agreement on the severity of the issue.

The right steps are being taken to address security concerns at the border. Acknowledging that an international source is massively contributing to the opioid crisis is the first beneficial step the Liberals have taken to combat the issue.

Ensuring that the Canada Border Services Agency can now open any suspicious package under 30 grams will stop the inflow of illegal substances dramatically.

Unregulated devices such as pill presses are another massive contributor to the opioid crisis, and that is acknowledged in the bill. These devices are allowing organized crime to produce mass amounts of deadly drugs. Giving the CBSA authority to share information with law enforcement agencies will allow police forces to do their jobs and shut down these illegal activities.

The bill also acknowledges the notion that new dangerous substances are constantly being manufactured. In order to control the quick turnaround of newly designed psychoactive substances, under new regulations, the minister would be able to temporarily and quickly schedule control of a dangerous substance.

These are public safety measures that look out for the best interests of all Canadians. These measures look to negatively affect organized crime and make it harder for organized crime to produce and sell dangerous drugs.

However, severely weakening the consultation process with Canadians before the approval of an injection site is the exact opposite of these other measures. Approving these sites all around the country will normalize substance abuse. Drug addicts will still be committing extreme numbers of crimes to obtain these drugs. They will still be contributing to organized crime, and they are all to use freely in a government-sanctioned facility.

I acknowledge that every province has different needs. What is happening in British Columbia is not the same as what is happening in Prince Edward Island. However, I cannot acknowledge that injection sites save lives. I heard the analogies from a medical addiction specialist who said that, "If I was a lifeguard and saw someone drowning, I would run in and pull them out of the water. Once they started breathing again, I would not throw them back into the water". That is exactly what injection sites do.

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Streamlining the application process for approving injection sites is irresponsible. It would put communities at risk and it would put individuals with severe drug dependencies at risk. Drug addiction should be seen as a treatable illness. Until I see the government take appropriate steps to help these people get off these dangerous and deadly drugs, I cannot, and will not, support this harm reduction band-aid solution.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, although I appreciate the member speaking to the legislation, I do not necessarily agree with a number of the points and conclusions that he has brought to the chamber.

The Vancouver Insite injection site has received overwhelmingly positive feedback since its creation. Its creation was based on consultation and had a federal minister working with the provincial entities and different stakeholders, including first responders and the community as a whole. I recall when the Conservatives brought in legislation to try to expand the area. There was a great deal of concern and scepticism toward the Conservatives back then because they did not support these injection-type sites, even though science and statistics clearly indicated that society benefits from these sites.

I take it from the member's statements that we will no doubt have to agree to disagree on the validity of the injection sites, but that we do agree on the crisis of opioids. This legislation will assist in dealing with that crisis. Given the urgency of the opioid crisis in Canada, at the very least, would the member not agree that we should attempt to get this to committee as soon as possible?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I think everyone in the House agrees this is urgent. When we look at addiction as a health problem, it is clear we would treat no other health condition like this. Even if we were to define the harm in the term "harm reduction" as an addict putting heroin into his or her arm, I think the approach would be to try to help that addict so he or she would not do that.

We have seen statistics. I remember talking to Vernon White. He said that the average addict committed four to eight illegal crimes every day to get his or her fix. Therefore, by allowing addicts to go into one of these injection sites to inject an illicit substance, which as far as we know could be filled with kerosene, and then giving them a little shake and letting them go back out again saying that we have saved their life, we are enabling them to go out in that community and commit four to eight crimes again. Whether it is break and enter or prostitution, let us imagine that happening four to eight times per day and all we are saying is, "Come back in again. We'll see what we can do to help you."

My colleague from Vancouver was adamant and passionate. This was a band-aid solution. We need to work on long-term detox programs. I find it uncomfortable that the minister just finished renegotiating the health accord and did not get a firm commitment from the provinces and territories to open up these detox centres. That is what really saves lives.

• (1100)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, what is stunning to me is that the member appears to be saying that he agrees that we are facing an opioid epidemic.

We have been told by the minister that there has been an 80% increase in deaths from overdose since 2015. There have been huge increases in deaths from overdose in my city alone.

More than 87 organizations that work with the homeless, the HIV-infected, and the addicted came forward to oppose the legislation of the member's government. They said that safe injection sites were proven to decrease overdose, death, injury and risk behaviour, that access to health care for the marginalized increased, that it saved health care costs, and that it decreased open drug use and publicly discarded equipment.

Therefore, given the member supports the fact that there is an opioid epidemic, will he support our call for a national public emergency to be declared so federal resources will be made available immediately, and at least temporary safe injection sites?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, what my colleague says is quite true. The crisis is getting worse. Sometimes people get caught up in thinking they need to do something. However, as I said in my speech, if only 7% of the people who attended what some people call this "safe" injection site were offered treatment, why would we be repeating that around the country?

As the minister said herself, there are no good statistics being collected to determine the proper way of to move forward. Is it injection sites or needle exchanges? Therefore, before we move forward, it is important that we maintain the rights of communities to provide their input where these injection sites have been proposed. That is the most disturbing thing I find with the bill. It would remove a lot of the safeguards we had put in place as a government. The basic fact is this. We should not be normalizing these injection sites. They should be rare and should not be made the go-to way of treating these addictions. Rather, it should be detoxification treatment.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to work with my hon. colleague on the health committee. I very much respect his contributions to that committee, but with the greatest of respect, I must vehemently disagree with a number of the theses he is advocating here today.

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If health policy is to be based on evidence and not on ideology, then we must look to the best evidence we have. The validity and accomplishments of safe injection sites was exhaustively examined by the Supreme Court of Canada when it ruled on the Insite case back in 2011. In that case, mountains of evidence were placed before the court, including from *The Lancet*, which is one of the world's most respected medical journals. Evidence gathered around Insite itself showed that it results in fewer overdoses, and in fact, no deaths. There has not been a single death at a supervised injection site in this country ever. As my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona said, it results in there being less open drug use in the streets, less crime, and fewer discarded needles in our communities as well.

His own government brought in legislation that did permit safe injection sites to open, albeit it made it extremely difficult to open them. His own government must have acknowledged that there was some value to this, or perhaps it was just forced to do so by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Why did his government do nothing about the CBSA's prohibition on opening envelopes under 30 grams, which it took the present government to fix, so that we could stop the flow of fentanyl into this country? Why did his government not catch that and do something about it?

• (1105)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge my colleague for the good work he has done on committee. I think we agree on most things, except the injection site issue.

If he looks at the community where Insite is, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, I think he would agree with me that it is an exceptional neighbourhood. Before Insite was put into that neighbourhood, it was a horrible situation. The injection site was put there basically as an experiment. We had to do something. In that particular community, there was a lot of support for it. I think he is very aware of the strong support among all stakeholders.

That is one exceptional neighbourhood. I do not see any neighbourhood in Canada as bad as that one is or was in the past. If we look at the evidence, and he was there in health committee, unless communities are actually supportive and on side with these facilities, they do not have a chance of being successful. There is not a lot of evidence to support taking this template and just moving it across the country. As he said, there has only been one. To duplicate that based on that one experience is not the responsible thing to do.

Some things have been brought up over and over again, such as saving lives. I would suggest that if someone is injecting in front of them, that is to be expected, but to send them back out without proper treatment and moving them into a treatment program, as we would with any other disease in Canada, is that the best we can do? If that was our child or our friend, is that really the best we could do?

I look forward to working with my colleague on seeing what we can do to move that agenda forward, because I think that is something all Canadians in all communities can agree on.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canada is currently in the grips of an unprecedented opioid overdose crisis. According to David Juurlink, one of Canada's leading drug safety experts:

This is the greatest drug safety crisis of our time, and it's not hyperbole to say that every one of you knows somebody with an opioid use disorder. Whether you realize it or not, you do, and it's quite possible that you know someone who's lost a loved one to these drugs.

He went on to say:

The scope of the problem in Canada is completely unknown. We know that in the U.S., the CDC estimates that over the last 20 years, about a quarter of a million people have died from opioids, more than half of them from prescription opioids... We have no corresponding numbers in Canada. I speculate that somewhere in the order of 20,000 Canadians have died over the last 20 years from these drugs. The fact that no federal politician can tell you that number is a national embarrassment.

In my home province of British Columbia, illicit drug overdoses claimed the lives of at least 914 people last year, making it the deadliest on record for overdoses. This places it at the same level as Alabama, the worst state in the United States in terms of overdose rates.

Last year two Ontarians died every single day from drug overdoses, with one of every eight deaths of young adults due to opioids, and 338 Albertans died last year. Quebec overdose deaths have increased by 140% over the last 10 years.

Although Canada does not track overdose deaths at the national level, which again is an inexcusable deficiency in national health policy, it is estimated that in 2015 alone, 2,000 Canadians died from overdoses. That number is certainly much higher for 2016 due to the rapid proliferation of extremely potent illicit opioids throughout Canada.

It is patently clear that drug overdoses and deaths are increasing in every region of the country and will continue to do so without extraordinary and effective action. The significant increase in overdoses in 2016 prompted B.C.'s provincial health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, to declare a public health emergency last April for the first time in the province's history. Notwithstanding this extraordinary step, the crisis has deepened.

December saw another record spike in deaths in B.C., with Vancouver alone now registering 15 overdose deaths per week. This is truly a crisis of epidemic proportions.

Fentanyl, an opioid 100 times more potent than heroin, has been called a game-changer for drug overdose deaths in Canada, and now we are seeing overdoses caused by carfentanyl, an opioid so powerful that it poses overdose risks to those exposed to it simply through inhalation or contact with their skin. These drugs are so dangerous that a dose the size of a grain of salt can cause overdose or death.

I think we can all acknowledge that there are many aspects to this complex crisis. Fentanyl is strong, cheap, easy to transport, and small amounts can be made into thousands of doses. For \$10,000 or \$20,000, manufacturers can obtain a kilogram of fentanyl, an amount so compact it can fit in a shoebox, and turn it into \$20 million in profit.

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Many overdoses are being caused by inexperienced young people experimenting with non-opioid recreational drugs, unaware that they are contaminated with fentanyl. For example, this past fall in Vancouver, there were nine overdoses recorded within 20 minutes in people who were using cocaine that was unknowingly laced with fentanyl.

Opioids have been overused and over-prescribed by doctors for pain management, leading to many patients becoming dependent and addicted. Canada has among the highest per capita volume of opioids dispensed in the world, totalling 19.1 million prescriptions in Canada in 2015, up from 18.7 million the year before. That is about one opioid prescription written for every two Canadians.

Even though there are no credible peer-reviewed studies that demonstrate that opioids afford more benefit than harm for chronic pain, opioid use has been marketed beyond palliative and cancer patients for regular use for people experiencing back pain and other common ailments. Prescribers were incorrectly taught that addiction was a rare consequence of using prescription opioids long term, that less than 1% of patients would become addicted.

• (1110)

In reality, the addiction rate is estimated to be 10%, with 30% suffering from opioid use disorder. This misuse of opioids reveals the absence of broad and effective treatment for chronic pain in Canada. Critically, there is an alarming lack of public detox and treatment facilities available across Canada, caused by under-investment for decades at both provincial and federal levels, and even less resources dedicated to education and prevention.

Bluntly, our health care system has an appalling lack of publicly covered treatment options for Canadians suffering from substance use disorder, a pox on both Liberal and Conservative governments over the last number of decades.

In indigenous communities, inconsistent federal support for community governed and culturally based treatment has made addressing the opioid crisis a particular challenge. Nurses employed by Health Canada do not possess the scope of practice to support indigenous people in addressing opioid addiction in their own communities beyond 30 days by federal edict.

As Dr. Claudette Chase, a family physician at the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority recently told our health committee:

I tear up every time I think about this, because our workers are putting themselves on the line to hear the stories of incredible trauma. We have little funding to train them. These are community members who, because Health Canada has refused to step up, have stepped up themselves. They do this and they get traumatized daily, and I have little or no means to support them other than being their family doctor. It's not acceptable.

Addiction is a complex psychosocial disease with genetic, environmental, and social determinant influences of every type. Although this crisis has been garnering increased media attention in recent months, make no mistake that it has been allowed to escalate for years, recently under a Conservative government blinded by superficial ideology and now under a Liberal government paralyzed by timid expediency.

What both Conservative and Liberal governments have in common, however, is a refusal to act on evidence in a timely fashion, and decades of history of failure to make the investments

necessary to provide Canadians with essential health options to treat substance use disorder.

Over the last 10 years, the previous Conservative government slashed Health Canada's addiction treatment budget, removed harm reduction as one of the four pillars of Canadian drug policy, and spent nearly a decade trying to discredit the clear and overwhelming evidence that supervised consumption sites save lives.

Indeed, this crisis has undeniably been exasperated by barriers erected by a Conservative government that prevented supervised consumption sites from opening across Canada. Despite an abundance of research that conclusively established that Vancouver's supervised consumption facility, Insite, significantly reduced overdose deaths, the Conservative government obstinately refused to accept that evidence.

In 2011, it took the Supreme Court of Canada to rule that Insite and other supervised consumption sites must be granted a section 56 exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act because they "decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety".

In response, in 2015, the Conservative government introduced Bill C-2, which sets out a lengthy and arduous list of criteria that supervised consumption site applicants must meet before the minister would grant them an exemption. In practice and by design, these criteria made it effectively impossible for organizations to open new supervised consumption sites in Canada.

For example, Montreal has had applications pending Health Canada approval since May 2015, almost two years, for three fixed services in three neighbourhoods and one mobile service. Indeed, not a single supervised consumption site has opened in Canada since Bill C-2 was passed. Of course, that was exactly the Conservatives' intention.

Only an hour after Bill C-2 was initially introduced, in a move so vile it would impress Donald Trump, Conservative campaign director Jenni Byrne issued a fundraising letter stating that the Liberals and NDP wanted addicts to shoot up in the backyards of communities all across the country. This went beyond a juvenile refusal to accept evidence that ran contrary to their moralizing ideology. It was a clear and utterly disgraceful attempt to campaign on the backs of the most vulnerable Canadians, sick Canadians.

• (1115)

For those Conservative MPs who now claim to have found religion on the issue, who have recently echoed the NDP's long-standing call to declare a national public health emergency, I must remind them that it was Conservatives who blocked my attempt to move this bill swiftly through the House in December, to save lives faster.

Though the Liberals claim to support the expansion of supervised consumption sites, their government has not approved a single new facility since coming to office. In fact, the Minister of Health initially and stubbornly argued that legislative changes to Bill C-2 were not even necessary, since she had directed Health Canada officials to facilitate the application process under the existing law. She refused to acknowledge that the problem was the act itself with its 26 separate requirements acting as effective barriers to any new sites, as had been consistently pointed out by stakeholders, the NDP, and even some of her own colleagues. This tepid response stood in stark contrast to the view espoused by the member for Vancouver Centre, the Liberal member for Vancouver Centre, when she was the Liberal health critic in opposition.

When Bill C-2 was introduced, the member for Vancouver Centre publicly stated that the bill was deliberately written in a way that would ensure no supervised consumption sites were approved in Canada. She also questioned the constitutionality of the bill. It has frequently been observed that Liberals campaign from the left and govern from the right, that they talk progressively in opposition, but act conservatively when in power. I am afraid their conduct on the opioid crisis is yet one more example of this unfortunate truism.

Unacceptably, it took a mounting death toll and universal pressure from medical experts, public health officials, provincial governments, municipal leaders, and the federal NDP before the Minister of Health finally relented and outlined legislative changes she was willing to make to Bill C-2, on December 12, 2016. This came on the heels of an announcement from the B.C. government that it was no longer willing to wait for federal approval and would take the extraordinary measure of signing a ministerial order making the provincial operation of temporary overdose prevention sites legal. This was in turn a response to the unsanctioned, makeshift supervised consumption sites that were being established throughout B.C. by activists like Ann Livingston and Sarah Blyth, who founded the Overdose Prevention Society last September with crowdfunding, due to the severity of the crisis.

While the current government was waiting, while people were dying, people in British Columbia and on the street were acting. Thus, the bill is an overdue acknowledgement that this is, in fact, a crisis and contains some important steps to address it.

I do want to credit the government for taking some positive measures.

The Liberals hosted an opioid summit, where they committed to better informing Canadians about the risks of opioids, supporting better prescribing practices, and improving the evidence base. They made naloxone available in a non-prescription status. They reversed the federal prohibition on the use of pharmaceutical heroin for treatment. They scheduled fentanyl precursors. They reinstated harm reduction as one of the four pillars of drug policy. Now the government has introduced amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and other acts, to streamline supervised consumption site applications.

These changes are all welcome, if overdue, and New Democrats are in agreement with all of them. However, they do not go nearly far enough, fast enough. There is much more that we can and must do.

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That is why I must take serious exception to comments made by the Minister of Health in a recent interview. The minister said:

I would argue with the fact as to whether or not there's been progress made. I know that the number of deaths are rising, but we have been extremely active on this file....

I do not know how the minister measures progress, but I do know one thing. When Canadians are dying at unprecedented rates, when month after month we see increased death tolls from opioid overdoses, there can be no legitimate talk of progress. We in the New Democratic Party will measure progress by one factor and one factor only: when the death toll of Canadians goes down, not up. However by that standard, the crisis is getting dramatically worse, not better. Annually since 2012, the number of fatal overdoses in B.C. has increased significantly: 273 deaths in 2012, 330 in 2013, 366 in 2014, 510 in 2015, and now 914 in 2016.

Last month alone, we recorded the highest number of overdose deaths in B.C.'s history, with 142 lives lost. That is more than double the monthly average of overdose deaths since 2015 and a sharp increase from the fall. There were 57 overdose deaths in B.C. in September, 67 in October, and 128 in November. That is not progress.

• (1120)

To understand the scale of this epidemic, I would remind the House that during the SARS crisis in 2003, 44 people died in an outbreak of the disease across all of Canada. We are losing that many people every week to opioid overdoses.

I would suggest to members of the House that if 40 to 50 Canadians were dying every week from SARS, Ebola, or any other infectious disease, the House would not rest until it saw a response from the federal government that matched the severity of the crisis. Every life lost to overdose is a heart-wrenching tragedy that leaves devastated loved ones in its wake. The lives cut short by overdose matter just as much as anyone's, and this epidemic deserves the same attention and urgency as any other disease.

Moreover, we must remember that the consequences of inaction are felt severely by those on the front lines of this crisis. As Chris Coleman, a firefighter who works on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, told the health committee:

...it takes a toll on an individual's mental health to see such helplessness and suffering up close on a daily basis; to work extremely hard but to feel that you are having little or no impact on a problem that is growing exponentially, like a tidal wave, on the streets of your city. There is mental strain in watching a population repeatedly harming itself and in ultimately witnessing death and deceased persons who have succumbed to this human tragedy....

I must stress that our brothers and sisters who work in the Downtown Eastside are in trouble... In conversations with these firefighters, I hear a lot of "It's driving me nuts" and "I can't take it". I'm told stories of their being in an alley with 20 or 30 drug users. They're unprepared and untrained for that. Part of their hopelessness comes from having to deal with the same particular overdose patient who has a needle in their neck, who's rolling around in urine and feces, more than once on the same shift. They feel abandoned and they feel hopeless

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We must not condemn our courageous first responders to the fate of Sisyphus, rolling an immense boulder up a hill over and over again for eternity. They need the Government of Canada to have their backs.

Indeed, the federal government's failure of leadership on the opioid crisis has led to renewed pleas for help from public officials from all across Canada. These include the mayors of Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver, B.C.'s health minister, and health professionals from every discipline.

I know that the Minister of Health has repeatedly stated in public that the federal government is doing everything it can. Of course, that is utter nonsense. There are literally dozens of measures and recommendations made by health experts and stakeholders across Canada that remain unimplemented by the government.

Recently, the City of Vancouver sent a list of nine recommendations to the federal government to help address this crisis, including calling for a central command structure, daily meetings with Health Canada, and improved treatment services. A coroner's jury in British Columbia recently issued a list of 21 recommendations for action, and the Standing Committee on Health in December issued a report detailing 38 recommendations for the government alone, most of which remain unimplemented.

To demonstrate this leadership and illustrate the federal government's understanding of the scope of this crisis, the New Democrats have been calling on the federal Minister of Health to declare a national public health emergency for months. We are now joined in this call by municipal, provincial, and federal politicians of all stripes, including, recently, the Conservatives.

A declaration of a national public welfare emergency under the Emergencies Act would empower Canada's top doctor with the authority to take extraordinary measures to coordinate a national response to the crisis. This could include an allocation of emergency funding on the scale required to actually address the mounting death toll, as well as sanctioning the operation of temporary supervised consumption sites on an emergency basis.

Inexplicably, the minister continues to claim that a national public welfare declaration is unnecessary and untimely. With respect, she is utterly and demonstrably wrong. For example, such a declaration would allow overdose prevention sites across the country to open and operate legally, something they cannot do now. Not only are such sites needed desperately in every major city in Canada, but they would start saving lives today.

New Democrats have worked in good faith with successive federal governments to address the crisis with the urgency it deserves. We led the fight against the Conservatives' Bill C-2 from the day it was introduced, and then pressed the Liberal government to repeal or amend it. Last fall, we moved a motion at the standing committee to conduct an emergency study on the crisis. We tried to expedite this bill through the House in December; and we were the first to call for a declaration of a national public health emergency to address the crisis.

● (1125)

The New Democratic Party will support this bill and work in committee to improve it. We will continue to press the government to take every action it can to address this national public health crisis.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I support many of the comments the member made in reference to Bill C-2, especially his reflections on the Conservative government at the time. I was here, like him, and I like to think it was not only the NDP. The Liberals were also in great opposition to Bill C-2 and made commitments to look at making changes. What we are talking about today addresses some of the issues that were raised during the debate on Bill C-2 by both opposition parties.

I agree, in good part, with the beginning of the member's comments. Where I take some exception, and where the member needs to get a better appreciation, is on the statement that the national government has not demonstrated leadership. The Minister of Health and the Prime Minister have demonstrated leadership on the opioid crisis here in Canada.

The Minister of Health has been very proactive. The member himself made reference to a series of things the Minister of Health has done. We have to take into consideration an enormous amount of work with the different stakeholders, whether they are provincial administrations, indigenous people, first responders, and so forth. It has to be a coordinated approach.

My question for the member is this. Does he not recognize the importance of working with others, since it will not be just Ottawa that resolves this particular problem? Maybe he could comment further on how the House today can assist in expediting the passage of this legislation.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, sometimes Liberals say that the New Democrats are Liberals in a hurry. The corollary to that is that Liberals are New Democrats who will not take action.

My hon. colleague brings up something that I made a central point of my speech, which is that when Liberals were in opposition, they stood in the House and told Canadians that they opposed Bill C-2, that they believed that supervised consumption sites save lives, and that Bill C-2 was deliberately designed to prevent the opening of supervised injection sites in this country. In fact, the member for Vancouver Centre, the senior Liberal in British Columbia and the Liberal critic for health at the time, called the bill unconstitutional.

That is why New Democrats, as soon as the Parliament changed back in October of 2015, at first opportunity, called on the government to introduce legislation to amend or repeal Bill C-2. New Democrats started the call in February of last year. Why? It was because we saw that there was a crisis. People were dying every week.

Government Orders

What did the Liberals do? They told the NDP they did not think, while in government, that there was any problem with the legislation, that they just thought it was an administrative problem. Every month, New Democrats stood in the House and told Liberals they had to act to change it because supervised consumption sites save lives and the bill was a barrier. Month after month, Liberals stalled and did nothing while Canadians died. It took them until December, after over a year in office, before they actually introduced legislation, which will now take months to pass.

I am going to give the Liberal government no credit for its inaction and delay on introducing legislation that is so critical to saving lives in this country, and New Democrats will continue to push the government to take the dozens of recommendations that are necessary to continue to do so.

• (1130)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am looking at some of the embedded criteria regarding injection sites. I was not here at the time, but as I go through this, I see they include support from local government with respect to health and safety, a letter from the head of the police, a letter from health professionals in relation to public health, information on the vicinity of the site, information on the inappropriate discarding of drug-related paraphernalia, a number of issues on data gathering, drug treatment, and trends. All of those things were embedded, and I am wondering which piece was a roadblock to establishing a consumption site. Insite has been there for 13 years and was established under the Conservative government.

I am wondering what piece of the consultation he is not supporting.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, the legislation that the Conservative Party brought in was forced upon that government after fighting Insite in the Supreme Court of Canada. Instead of listening to the evidence and working with health professionals, a decision by that member's government forced Insite to spend millions of dollars going to the Supreme Court of Canada to establish that supervised consumption sites save lives. In that decision, the Supreme Court identified five factors that ought to be met before a community permitted the opening of a supervised consumption site. The Conservatives took that Supreme Court decision and they exploded those five factors to 26, and a number of those factors have absolutely nothing to do with health.

For those of us who view addiction as a health issue, for those of us who view the operation of these clinics as being pivotal to saving lives, I will point out that not a single person has died in a supervised consumption site facility in this country. As my former colleague Libby Davies used to say, “dead addicts don't get recovery”.

From a health point of view, when a community wishes to have such a site we should focus on criteria that would help to address the health issues there.

It is not a question of finger-pointing; it is a question of establishing facts. The previous Conservative government slashed Health Canada's budget for addictions treatment by 15%. It did nothing about the CBSA's problem in being unable to open 30-gram or under envelopes. The Conservative government fought supervised

consumption sites in this country right to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I will take no lectures from the Conservative Party about how to save lives in the opioid crisis.

• (1135)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway for a thoughtful and passionate speech on the opioid use disorder crisis in Canada.

Nine hundred and fourteen people died last year in my province of British Columbia. In my riding of Victoria, dozens of people have died, while we watched the government take no action over the last year on this issue. I am delighted to hear the minister make commitments today. This is very personal. I know people whose family members have died as a consequence of inaction over the last while.

I would ask my colleague to elaborate a bit on what this national health emergency means and what the Emergencies Act might allow by way of powers. My colleague talked about the 38 recommendations from the health committee. He talked about recommendations from the City of Vancouver and in coroners' reports. If we have a crisis, which we do, I would ask the member what powers would be available to the government were it to trigger that?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Victoria for his excellent work on this issue when he was our party's health critic.

A piece of federal legislation called the Emergencies Act permits the declaration of a public welfare emergency when one of two situations exists. The first is if a province is experiencing a problem that is so serious and severe that it overwhelms its own ability to deal with it. The second situation is when an issue affects more than one province across the country. It is the latter situation that is clearly the case in Canada right now. All provinces across this country are experiencing problems with the opioid overdose crisis.

There are a number of extraordinary powers that would be given to Canada's top doctor under the Emergencies Act were the government to declare a public welfare emergency. There are two in particular. The act would allow the flow of emergency funds commensurate with the emergency without having to go through this process in the House. Second and most important, the act would allow the government to open emergency hospitals or clinics, for example, if a disease was spreading across this country and we needed mobile units immediately.

The overdose prevention sites that are really currently operating against the law right now would be deemed legal were the government to declare a public welfare emergency and cities across this country could open those up today and start saving lives today.

The Liberal government will not do it and I have no idea why it will not.

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Government Orders

I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts. My private member's bill, Bill C-224, the good Samaritan drug overdose act, is currently in the other place. Just like Bill C-37, it is just one piece in the harm reduction tool kit that would help to save lives.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a key priority for this government. That is why on December 12, 2016, the Minister of Health, with support from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, introduced Bill C-37 in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

This bill makes several amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and the Customs Act in support of the government's efforts to respond to the current opioid crisis and problematic substance abuse in general.

[*English*]

This comprehensive bill aims to balance the important objectives of protecting public health and maintaining public safety. It is designed to better equip both health professionals and law enforcement with the tools they need to address the issue.

Over the last decade, the harms associated with problematic substances abuse in Canada have become more complex and have been changing at a rapid pace. The line between licit and illicit substances has blurred with the opioid crisis, prescription drug misuse, and the rise of new designer drugs.

The government has committed to helping Canadians affected by these problematic substances and their use. Legislative and regulatory controls are certainly an important part of this approach. However, as we know, drug use and dependency pose significant risks for individuals, families, and communities. Our approach to addressing problematic substances abuse must include preventing and treating addiction, supporting recovery, and reducing the negative health and social impacts of drug use on individuals and their communities through evidence-based harm reduction measures. This must also be a part of our approach to addressing problematic substances abuse.

Harm reduction is viewed by experts as a cost-effective element of a well-balanced approach to public health and safety. Harm reduction connects people to other services in the health and social systems related to treatment and recovery. It recognizes that individuals and whole communities benefit when people with substance misuse and addiction issues can obtain the support and services they need rather than being marginalized or stigmatized. The evidence regarding harm reduction is absolutely clear. Harm reduction measures are a critical piece of a comprehensive approach to drug control.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

That is why the government is determined to take a balanced, evidence-based approach that supports rather than creates obstacles to harm reduction.

[*English*]

To that end, on December 12, 2016, in addition to introducing Bill C-37 in the House, the Minister of Health announced that a national anti-drug strategy would be replaced with a new, more balanced, and health-focused approach, called the Canadian drugs and substances strategy. The new strategy will strengthen Canada's approach to drug policy by providing a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and evidence-based approach to the protection of public health and safety and the reduction of harm from misuse of licit and illicit substances. To reflect the new health-focused approach, the strategy will be led and co-ordinated by the Minister of Health, in close collaboration with her colleagues.

Canada has had successive drug strategies in place since 1987 that have aimed to balance public health and public safety. In 1992, the government launched Canada's drug strategy, which was intended to reduce the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs to individuals, families, and communities. In 1998, harm reduction was added as a pillar alongside prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

However, the balance between public health and public safety in Canada's approach to drug policy shifted in 2007, with the release of the national anti-drug strategy. This strategy reflected the previous government's priorities of public safety, crime reduction, and safe communities.

The national anti-drug strategy focused primarily on youth and illicit substance use and did not retain harm reduction as a pillar. This shift brought Canada out of step with other like-minded countries, most of which include harm reduction in addressing problematic substance abuse.

The new strategy will retain and build upon the aspects of the national anti-drug strategy that worked well and, specifically, the new strategy will maintain the existing and well-established areas of prevention, treatment, and enforcement. These pillars, respectively, aim to prevent problematic drug and substance use, support innovative approaches to treatment and rehabilitation, and address illicit drug production, supply, and distribution.

However, perhaps the most important aspect of the new strategy is that it will improve upon the national anti-drug strategy by formally restoring harm reduction as a pillar. This shift to a more health-focused approach has been welcomed by stakeholders, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and our provincial partners.

Government Orders

Our government is committed to ensuring that its policies under the new strategy will be informed by a strong foundation of evidence, including data related to harm reduction policies, programs, and interventions. This will enable the government to better identify trends, target interventions, monitor impacts, and support evidence-based decisions. It will help ensure that Canada has a comprehensive national picture of drug use and drug-related harms and can fully meet our international reporting requirements.

Even before the new strategy was announced, our government included harm reduction measures in our efforts to reduce the negative health and social impacts associated with problematic drug use, including the transmission of infectious diseases, overdose deaths, and stigma.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

For example, under federal legislation, we have improved access to naloxone, an overdose reversal drug, by making it available without a prescription specifically for emergency use in cases of opioid overdose outside of hospital settings.

This important measure broadens access for emergency workers and will help address a growing number of opioid overdoses.

[*English*]

We have also demonstrated our support for the establishment of supervised consumption sites, a key harm reduction measure.

After a thorough and rigorous review, in January 2016, Health Canada granted an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act for the Dr. Peter Centre to operate a supervised consumption site.

Not long after, on March 16, 2016, Health Canada granted Insite an unprecedented four-year exemption.

If passed, Bill C-37 would go further to support the implementation of evidence-based harm reduction measures. In particular, it would reduce the burden on communities that wish to apply for an exemption to operate a supervised consumption site.

The proposed amendments would streamline and simplify the application criteria, while ensuring that community consultation continues to be an integral part of the process. By streamlining the application and renewal process and adding a new transparency provision, applicants could be assured that the process would not cause unreasonable burden or delay.

In conclusion, our government's approach to drug policy strives to balance the important objectives of protecting public health and maintaining public safety.

The Canadian drugs and substances strategy will restore harm reduction as a pillar, alongside prevention, treatment, and enforcement, and will formalize our commitment to a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and evidence-based approach to Canada's drug policy.

It would mean that harm reduction-focused policies, such as support for properly established and maintained supervised con-

sumption sites and increased access to naloxone, would now officially be part of Canada's drug strategy.

Implementing measures proposed in Bill C-37 would be a key step in realizing the objectives of the Canadian drugs and substances strategy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP):

Madam Speaker, the Liberals have been in power for more than a year now and we have been asking that the Conservatives' Bill C-2 be withdrawn and reworked in order to consider the possibility of opening injection sites to help reduce the number of overdoses and overdose-related deaths.

We know that it is often the young, inexperienced users who end up overdosing. Some do not know that certain drugs contain fentanyl. Why have the Liberals still not reinvested in awareness and prevention? There is a desperate lack of resources for this. Front-line workers are saying that they need more resources to work on prevention.

What is the Liberal government doing to save lives and ensure that young people are not the primary victims of its inaction?

[*English*]

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Madam Speaker, it is plain that the Liberal government is taking meaningful action on this matter. We have undertaken a number of initiatives such as the conference, bringing together all provincial and territorial stakeholders involved in this crisis. We have also committed \$5 million for support of mental health and addictions issues. I certainly urge all provinces that have not done so to step up and make use of this.

• (1150)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite. He lives in the Lower Mainland. I am sure he is as aware, as I and other Lower Mainland MPs are, of the depth and breadth of the crisis taking place right now. Every day, two people die in the Lower Mainland. Every day in Ontario two people die. Every day in Alberta a person dies. This is a health crisis of an unimaginable extent. It is something that should be calling the government to take immediate action. Instead, for over a year, we saw the government drag its feet and refuse to do anything as the death toll rose, doubling and tripling. We are now talking about thousands of Canadians dying over the past couple of years.

The implications are enormous if nothing much happens. The government has moved very slowly on legislation. It has waited 15 months now. We are coming up to February tomorrow. The Liberals took office and could have moved something in December 2015. They have done nothing really to in any way fight to put in place the addiction treatment programs that are needed across the country, and they have refused to call a public health emergency.

Government Orders

Why is the government moving so dreadfully slowly in the midst of this crisis?

Mr. Ron McKinnon: Madam Speaker, I see no profit in fighting old battles and worrying about who did or did not do what when. What remains a fact at this time is that we are taking definitive and meaningful action, and moving forward in a substantive way on this issue. This bill shows that very well.

We have taken action all through our time in office, such as improving access to naloxone to controlling the availability and the supply of the precursors to the manufacture of things like fentanyl, all of which are meaningful actions. However, we are moving forward. It is time we all move forward and solve this problem together in a meaningful way, as we are setting about to do.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-37, an act that would better equip both health and law enforcement officials to reduce the supply of illicit opioids and other drugs and to reduce the risk of diversion of controlled substances.

[Translation]

Bill C-37 confirms once again our government's continued commitment to ensuring that our legislative frameworks for public health and safety are modern and effective.

[English]

Protecting public health through efforts to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote health is a key priority for the government. The recently announced Canadian drugs and substances strategy and the proposed legislative changes to streamline the application process for supervised consumption sites are just two ways the Government of Canada is demonstrating this commitment to public health.

This new strategy is comprehensive, collaborative and compassionate. It is comprised of four key pillars: prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement, which are built upon a strong foundation of evidence.

While the new strategy places an increased emphasis on public health, our government recognizes that effective drug policy must balance both public health and public safety.

[Translation]

Therefore, not only does Bill C-37 address harm reduction measures such as supervised injection sites, it also proposes new ways to deal with controlled substances that are obtained through illicit sources.

[English]

Bill C-37 would amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, or the CDSA, Canada's drug control statute. The CDSA provides a framework to control substances that can alter mental processes and that may produce harm to health and to society when diverted or misused. It has the dual purpose of protecting public health and maintaining public safety.

We know that the use of illicit substances can increase the risk of harm to health. The CDSA maintains public safety by restricting the

activities such as import, export and trafficking of controlled substances and precursors.

•(1155)

[Translation]

The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act has been in effect for two decades now and some of its regulations, enacted under previous legislation, have been in place much longer. While the CDSA serves us well in many areas, there has been a significant evolution in both the legitimate controlled substances and precursors industries as well as the illicit drug market.

[English]

As we all know, problematic substance use is a serious public health issue. Our government is very concerned about the increasing rates of opioid-related overdose deaths occurring across Canada right now, and the devastating impact this crisis is having on individuals, families and communities at large, including in my own riding of Edmonton Centre. Opioid-related overdoses in British Columbia and Alberta have reached a crisis point and urgent action is needed to protect public health and safety, and disrupt illegal production and trafficking. It is becoming increasingly critical to ensure that the CDSA is modernized in order to better protect Canadians, their families, and the communities in which they live.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada is taking concrete action that will help address the current crisis and keep deadly drugs such as fentanyl and carfentanil out of Canadian communities. If the proposed amendments in Bill C-37 were adopted, they would further strengthen and modernize the tools available to the government to combat the illegal production and distribution of drugs and reduce the risk of controlled substances being diverted to the illegal market.

[English]

One such action would prohibit the import of unregistered pill press and encapsulator devices.

Pill presses and encapsulators can be used legitimately to manufacture pharmaceuticals, food and consumer products as well. However, they may also be used to make illegal counterfeit drugs that look like legitimate pharmaceuticals. These counterfeit pills can contain dangerous substances such as fentanyl and W-18. Pill presses can produce thousands of illegal pills in a short period of time, which poses significant risks to the public health and safety of Canadians. Currently these devices can be legally imported into Canada without specific regulatory requirements.

Government Orders

Bill C-37 would require that every pill press and encapsulator imported into Canada be registered with Health Canada. This would serve as a tool to better equip law enforcement to reduce the supply of illicit opioids and other drugs in Canada. Proof of registration would have to be shown upon importation and unregistered devices could be detained by officials at the border. The devices captured under this provision are aligned with those for the import and sales that must be reported in the United States. A new schedule to the CDSA would be created, allowing additional devices to be controlled in the future to respond to changes in illicit drug production.

[*Translation*]

The proposed legislation would enable better information sharing about imports of pill presses and encapsulators with border officials and police forces during an investigation.

[*English*]

Bill C-37 would also make amendments to expand the offences and punishments for pre-production activities of any controlled substance. Pre-production includes buying and assembling the chemical ingredients and industrial equipment that are intended to be used to make illicit drugs, but are not specifically listed in the CDSA schedules. These activities are not currently controlled under the CDSA unless the intent is to produce methamphetamine.

Members of the House may recall that concerns about the growing popularity of methamphetamine prompted private member's bill, Bill C-475, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (methamphetamine and ecstasy), in 2011. The passage of this bill made it illegal to possess, produce, sell, or import chemicals with the knowledge that they would be used to produce or traffic methamphetamine.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Given the growing opioid crisis and the evidence of illegal production of other drugs in Canada, including fentanyl, we must go further. The amendments proposed in Bill C-37 would extend the provisions that were added in 2011 so that penalties would apply to the illegal production, distribution, import, export, and transport of anything used to produce or traffic any controlled substance.

The government recognizes the complex challenges faced by individuals who are involved in problematic substance use. We remain committed to working with our territorial and provincial partners to address the issues related to illegal drug use.

[*English*]

Bill C-37 is one part of our government's response to Canada's growing opioid crisis. The legislative changes proposed in the bill will make the CDSA a more robust act and increase law enforcement's ability to take early action against suspected drug production operations, and better equip enforcement to respond to the evolution of the illicit drug market.

[*Translation*]

I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hear what the member is saying and I agree there are some very important features in the bill. He talked about pill presses and encapsulators.

Back in April 2016, British Columbia declared a state of emergency over the fentanyl opioid crisis. Why is it taking until 2017 to take action when we have a state of emergency, with 900 people who have died in British Columbia? It will be almost a year later before the bill is passed. The member should be ashamed.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-37 is part of a comprehensive strategy of the Government of Canada to address this opioid crisis.

The Minister of Health has been very clear in her meetings with territorial and provincial counterparts from coast to coast to coast that this is a crisis. We see it in Alberta as well. We take every life that has been lost due to this crisis seriously.

The changes in Bill C-37 are part of a comprehensive strategy. It is a whole-of-government approach. We take this issue seriously. We are moving as a government, and that is our commitment, to save the lives of Canadians.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Edmonton Centre supporting the bill brought forward by his government. However, I have a question for him.

Our party has a long-standing call for his minister, who has the powers under the Emergency Act, to declare this a public emergency. The member is aware, as I and my city are, of the crisis we are facing with deaths from opioid addiction.

Will the member support our call for a declaration of an emergency so the minister can demand more funds be made available, and to at least have temporary injection sites? More than 87 organizations in Edmonton are desperately calling for immediate action, not for waiting until the bill finally passes through the House and Senate.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague's question as we are both from the city of Edmonton.

Government Orders

Our government clearly understands the crisis that Canadians and marginalized populations are facing when it comes to the use of illicit substances. We are taking all action and all steps to make sure that our work not only in Bill C-37 but with our provincial counterparts is moving apace. We are looking at how to make sure we have controlled use substance sites in place where wraparound supports can be made available. That is the kind of federal, provincial, and territorial partnerships we see not only in this proposed legislation but in our approach as a government to address this very serious issue not only in the city of Edmonton but in all cities and communities across the country.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Health conducted an emergency study of the opioid crisis. Of the 38 recommendations set out in the report, the very first recommendation, which has the support of all parties, calls on the government to declare the opioid overdose crisis a national public health emergency. However, the Minister of Health has refused to do so, despite the fact that experts, municipalities, and even provinces have been calling on her to do so.

If a national public health emergency were to be declared, funds would be allocated, which would make it possible to invest more in helping victims and to urgently approve the creation of safe injection sites.

How is it that, a year later, a public health emergency still has not been declared despite the fact that British Columbia has never before seen such a high rate of overdoses and deaths from overdoses? The problem is only getting worse. How many people have to die before Canada will say enough is enough, declare a national public health emergency, and do something to save lives?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

What is clear about this matter in Bill C-37 is that it is only one part of our comprehensive strategy to combat the use of illicit substances. In terms of the opioid crisis, the work of the Minister of Health with her provincial and territorial counterparts is clearly very important.

Bill C-37 provides us with other tools to prevent the production and trafficking of these illicit substances. It is important to note that we take very seriously the deaths caused by the use of illicit drugs. We have a comprehensive strategy. We will continue this fight to safeguard the lives of all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

I am rising to speak to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

As we all know, addiction issues have been a challenge throughout the history of mankind. As noted by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, addiction touches everyone. As of 2013, one in five Canadians, or six million people, met the criteria for

substance use disorder, causing harm and heartache among families and communities throughout the country. Today, however, we are facing an unprecedented crisis: the casual or addictive use of drugs now includes a much higher risk of death.

I would note there were some questions in the previous exchange where the government talked about how it worked very hard with the provinces in terms of moving forward, but what the Liberals did not say is that they worked hard with the opposition.

There are many pieces of the bill that are very supportable and should move forward in a rapid and timely way, but the Liberals know very well that there is one component that we have a few concerns with, and I will articulate the reasons a little later. If the Liberals are talking about being concerned about this crisis, they should have proposed something that would allow us to immediately move forward with all the things we know we can agree on, and take a little bit more time for the conversation over the one piece that is giving us a bit of a challenge. This is a big concern.

The other big concern which people who are listening and watching need to be aware of is that on April 14, 2016, B.C. declared a public health emergency in response to this rise in drug overdoses and deaths. Now it is months later, at a time when pill presses and encapsulators, and border issues have been identified, but what did the government first talk about in its call for debate yesterday? It was a bill on Statistics Canada. It is absolutely shameful. The government had the opportunity to move forward on some important issues, but Statistics Canada was more important on our first day back. They presented a bill that the Liberals knew there were some challenges with instead of presenting something that we could all immediately support and move forward in a timely way. I think the Liberals should look at how they have dealt with this issue.

An emergency was declared in April, and it was recognized. Maybe it has not hit some of the other provinces, but it is interesting that it was a Liberal member, the member for Vancouver Centre, who said that if this crisis was happening in Ontario or Quebec, action would have been taken much sooner. That was said by a Liberal member, a family physician, who called out her own party on how it responded to this particular crisis. That is absolutely shameful.

The recent epidemic is characterized by an increasing proportion of death related to fentanyl, which is an illicit opioid substance. Back in 2012, fentanyl was seen in about 5% of the illicit drugs, and in 2016 it was seen in 60%. Fentanyl is dramatically increasing in use. In British Columbia in 2016, there were 914 deaths, with 142 in December alone.

Many might have read the Facebook page of the grandmother who was grieving for her young granddaughter saying that she just needed some help. She felt that maybe she could have dealt with her granddaughter who died a couple of days before Christmas.

Government Orders

In Kamloops, a community I represent, there were 40 deaths over the year. It typically had 10 deaths, steady over years and years, but in 2016, 40 people died in Kamloops from a drug overdose. With SARS, there were 40 deaths across Canada, and H1N1 had 400 deaths across Canada. I was on the health committee when H1N1 was happening. I remember that we had daily briefings from the chief public health officer of Canada. It was Dr. Butler-Jones at the time. He kept parliamentarians up to date every day on what was happening. That was for 400 deaths across Canada. We are talking about 900 deaths in British Columbia alone.

● (1210)

We do have in Bill C-37 a partial response to this crisis. As I indicated earlier, there are measures in the bill that are very supportable, such as the prohibition of designated devices, encapsulators, and adding to the schedule of substances reasonable grounds to represent health risks. There are more powers proposed for Canada Border Services Agency. We knew a year ago those were some of the things that could have been done to avert this crisis. The addition to broaden the prohibition and penalties to now apply to the possession, sale, importation, or transport of anything intended to be used is an important measure.

However, if the government had been concerned, it could have dealt with this many months ago instead of debating a bill about Statistics Canada. This is about people who are dying in British Columbia, and soon across the country.

I want to talk about the areas in which I have what I think are reasonable concerns. That is the part we need to be debating as parliamentarians. There is one area where there is a bit of a difference of opinion and it has to do with the process that should be in place for what they call safe consumption sites, or what are more commonly known by the public as injection sites, to move forward. That is a reasonable discussion.

Our Conservative government brought in the Respect for Communities Act. Certainly, there are some people who felt it made it too difficult, but it is a valid place for us to talk about what that should look like. We originally had 26 criteria that were to be addressed when people applied for a safe injection site. This bill changes it from 26 criteria to five factors. That is a little vague.

When I talked to the minister at committee, I tried to go through the 26 criteria. I asked her what objection she had to them, but I really did not get an answer. None of them said they were really concerned about any one piece, “I don't think the RCMP should be able to have a say”, or “I don't think municipal council should have a say”. Those are the criteria that are in place. What is being proposed now is a few factors.

The other thing the government has done is there were six principles that should be part of the thinking around whether the minister would approve a site or not. These principles have been totally removed and there are no principles left. Those are principles that recognize the issue of crime profits or criminal activity that is supported with illicit substances. We have gone from 26 criteria to five and there are no other checks and balances.

Using Kamloops as an example, the mayor and council voted unanimously to support a safe injection site. They have talked to the

RCMP. They are having a consultation process under former Bill C-2, which is now the Respect for Communities Act. That process allows the mayor and council to have input. They supported the safe injection site. I am not sure how they would feel if they were told they would not even be talked to about it, that it was just going to happen. They can write a letter and say whether they like it or not. They endorsed it unanimously. Interior health will be looking at it. That is important. As we know, Ottawa has not endorsed it. Those are pieces of public consultation that the government is looking to replace with vague references to talking to the community, but it really does not matter because communities do not tend to like these things. Kamloops council voted 100% for it. Why does the government not trust the community process that is specific and methodical?

There are some good pieces in the bill. We should move forward on those important pieces immediately. We should have done it a year ago. We should have a reasoned and appropriate debate around the changes to the safe injection sites. However, there are some pieces that are missing when it comes to the government's response to the crisis.

● (1215)

My colleague from South Surrey—White Rock and I both have said to listen to British Columbia. Let us call a state of emergency to raise the elevation so that people know about what is happening, because it is happening in B.C. now, and it will be going across the country. Youth councils are saying that there should be a national education campaign. Moms and dads need to be having that conversation. They will not have the conversation if they do not know.

In conclusion, let us look at the pieces, move forward on those critical ones, then look at doing those additional recommendations.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech from the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo with great interest. I heard her talk at length about the need to do this quickly. I agree with her. I wonder, if the member is so excited to get this done quickly, if she is willing to pass this through at all stages immediately.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I think I was very clear that there are pieces that should pass at all stages quickly. It is interesting. Kamloops looked at having a safe injection site. We went to the coroner to find out how many of the 40 deaths had been from the casual ingestion of pills and whether people would actually use a safe consumption site. That data is not available.

Points of Order

There are pieces of information that need to be part of making decisions. We have to be very thoughtful as we move forward on these measures. Let us move forward on some of the important pieces, but let us have a good debate and a good conversation about where we disagree.

[*Translation*]

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

I have trouble understanding the Conservatives' stance on the fundamental issue of supervised injection sites. Do they support the establishment of more than one site, a site other than the one we already know in Vancouver?

When the Conservatives were in power, they passed a bill allowing the establishment of supervised injection sites, but it was clear that the unstated objective was to make it as difficult as possible to create and open new sites.

I have a hard time understanding their position today. My colleague talked about the benefits of supervised injection sites. I would therefore like to know whether the Conservatives are now in favour of opening and setting up additional supervised injection sites.

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we created Bill C-2. There are 26 criteria, which include things like the mayor and council having consultations, the chief of police knowing what is going on, and letting the community know. In Kamloops, I had someone come to me who would have really liked to have had some input in terms of Kamloops and the locations. Under even the current system, the comment period had already closed.

What I am saying is that the Liberals have gutted a lot of reasonable processes around community decision-making on consumption sites. Something that really needs a good conversation in this House is Bill C-2, the Respect for Communities Act, and those 26 criteria. Maybe one or two were overdone, but there were a whole bunch that were great, and the current government has gutted those.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague for her speech today on such a critical, important issue, certainly for her riding in B.C. but also across all of Canada. I can say that in my riding of Essex, in southwestern Ontario, we also see this impending crisis coming our way. People and families are very concerned, very worried. We are going to be holding a round table this month to address the issue to prevent possible deaths, to prevent addiction, and to provide all of the contacts and the outreach the member is talking about.

Would the member not agree that the best way to do this is to declare a national health crisis so that we can have the funding find its way down to these levels and have the education set from a national directive, as opposed to right now municipalities and provinces trying to patch together things to help those who are impacted by the crisis?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock and I are on record as supporting the British Columbia minister in this call.

Again, I have to contrast the response to H1N1, where there was a massive, quickly activated national education program. There were regular briefings. There was a focused effort, in terms of a public health perspective, in dealing with that particular crisis. In this case, I am seeing delay and no sense of urgency.

As I noted before, we were talking about Stats Canada before talking about Bill C-37. The Liberals should look at what their priorities are in terms of dealing with what is a horrific crisis in Canada.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

INQUIRY BY ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I see the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle rising on a point of order.

The hon. member.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today in regard to the investigation of the Prime Minister's recent trip to the Aga Khan's private island by the Ethics Commissioner. As you may know, it was my letter to Mary Dawson that started the inquiry into his actions.

In June 2015, a new section was added to the Conflict of Interest Code that requires MPs who launch an investigation to await confirmation that the MP under investigation has been informed of the complaint before making public comment. When I sent my letter to Ms. Dawson, I copied the Prime Minister at the same time to make sure that he was made aware of my complaint. I also copied his office.

As you can imagine, there was a great deal of media interest in this affair, and I did respond to questions from journalists.

[*Translation*]

The commissioner has since informed me that I should have waited for her to get back to me before I commented on the matter publicly. I can assure you and the House, Mr. Speaker, that the error was totally inadvertent, because I believed that my actions were in accordance with the law. As a former Speaker of the House, I have the greatest respect for her office, for the rules governing ethics and conflicts of interest, and for the process by which those investigations are conducted.

Therefore, I want to apologize unreservedly to the Ethics Commissioner, to the House, and to yourself, Mr. Speaker.

I thank Ms. Dawson for having clarified the rules relating to this section of the act, for providing us with guidelines on how to proceed in the future, and for the attention she is giving to this matter.

Government Orders

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the comments on the part of the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and appreciate his intervention this afternoon. I do not think, by the sentiments expressed, that there is any need for follow-up, but again, I am sure the House appreciates the clarification on the part of the hon. member.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

* * *

● (1225)

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts. In essence, this is the government's response to the fentanyl and opioid health crisis facing this country.

I want to be clear that this health crisis is not just a B.C. issue. Many police raids have taken place in B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Over 20 fentanyl labs have been shut down across this country, and an entire fentanyl ring was successfully shut down in Montreal. However, I want to bring everyone's attention back to British Columbia, as it is ground zero and has been for quite some time, as communities struggle to deal with the fentanyl, carfentanil, and opioid issue. I want to talk about the impact, the government's response, and how we need to be addressing this growing issue.

I will first talk about some simple facts. It is well known that the chemicals and illicit drugs are manufactured in China. They can be ordered online and shipped overseas. There are thousands of illegal labs right across China. Pills and raw materials are shipped into Canada through our ports, our borders, and the mail.

Several thousand people have died across Canada. In B.C. alone, 914 people died last year. That is an 80% increase in deaths over 2015. In Vancouver, the increase was 60%; in Surrey, 42%; in Victoria, 267%; in Kelowna, 153%; and in Kamloops, 471%. This past December was the deadliest month of all, claiming the lives of 142.

Let us look at the response from the Liberal government. On December 12, just two days before the House rose for the Christmas break, this bill was introduced. In November of last year, the health minister refused to declare this a national health emergency, despite B.C. public health officer Dr. Perry Kendall declaring a public health emergency in April of last year, the recommendations from the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, and yet another call from B.C. health minister Terry Lake, who said, "We haven't seen the response that I think this type of epidemic requires on a national scale". Many MPs from all parties have requested the same, so we collectively, again, issue a call to declare a national public health emergency.

We need to raise awareness of this epidemic to the level it deserves. We need to embark upon a national educational awareness campaign to ensure that the general public, young adults, and students have the information and are informed. In fact, my youth council has requested that. There are ongoing fentanyl forums being undertaken in high schools, but there is still a perception that this is just a Downtown Eastside Vancouver issue and that consumption sites are the answer to this issue and need to be set up in every single community across the country.

Let us take a quick snapshot. A Delta mother of two lost both of her children within 20 minutes of each other. Both of those kids were 20 years old. Jordan died at 21. Ryan died at 23. Kelsea died at 24. David died at 21. Danny died in Edmonton at 25. Scott was 21. A young Abbotsford woman was in her mid-20s. Tyler died at 23 and had a four-year-old son. Hardy and Amelia, both in their 30s, leave behind a two-year-old son. They were celebrating moving into their new home. The list goes on.

● (1230)

This is where the complexities of this issue intersect. There is one strategy for those who are street-entrenched, who will inject and use consumption sites; there is another strategy for those who use pills and prescription drugs; and there is another strategy for those who are using recreationally and not realizing what they are taking. One size does not fit all.

I would argue that to assume that multiple consumption sites in every community would fix this health epidemic is short-sighted. This is a piece of a multifaceted response. We need to use some critical thinking around this issue. Our first responders and medical personnel are getting burnt out trying to respond to the overdoses and deaths. The federal government must assist those on the front lines who are dealing with this crisis on a daily basis.

For the first time, a pilot project is being undertaken that will test the street drugs that are being brought into the consumption site in Vancouver. I was thrilled at the proposition that the people who are suffering from addiction would now be advised as to what they are injecting and the potential outcomes.

Does this model fit all users? It does not. Therefore, let us explore these sides of the equation: treatment, mental health, dual diagnosis, and opioid substitution.

Methadone was once the answer for those addicted to heroin, back in 1996. Obviously, we can see that program is not working. Many communities have stand-alone methadone dispensaries, where prescriptions are bought and sold on the street and where individuals would trade their methadone for other drugs. This was the answer to the opioid addiction in 1996. Perhaps we need to re-evaluate that program or redirect some of that funding into other programs.

Government Orders

What are our needs? We do need treatment, and not just detox and 30-day programs. Rather, we need wraparound services. We need to care for the whole person, with mental health support as well as physical dependency and addiction support. This is a multi-faceted approach to a very complex problem, and it is a long-term solution. The holistic approach includes treatment beds and therapeutic communities, a place for those who want support, because the window of opportunity in an addict's life is fleeting. The response must be immediate and the resources must be available. This is not new information, but it is expensive and costly, and it is easier to focus on short-term solutions.

There has been a long-standing call for law enforcement to interrupt the flow of fentanyl and carfentanil in China. The response by the Liberals in Bill C-37 would allow border services the power to open packages weighing less than 30 grams, prohibition for the unregistered pill presses, and the illegal importation of precursors. We fully support those initiatives. However, as the Prime Minister moves forward with his trade negotiations with China and his extradition agreements, I would suggest that a topic of exporting fentanyl powder and pills be top of mind and that he undertake wholesome and meaningful discussions on the deadly effects that the exportation of this product has on the people of Canada and their loved ones.

This is a national health emergency, and those who have lost loved ones most certainly need to know that all three levels of government, the community, law enforcement, and first responders collectively care enough to do the right thing.

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the previous two speakers and heard them identify the complexity of this issue and wanting to move quickly on it. I am hoping that they both spent time listening to the minister this morning, because she very clearly identified how complex it is and the work that she and the government have already been doing with her partners, the health ministers of the provinces and territories.

My question is this. Can I have the member's acknowledgement that she will move quickly with us and approve all stages of this bill so we can expedite what needs to be done? Also, I heard this from the previous speaker but did not have a chance to ask a question. Perhaps the member can answer it. Why would the member challenge the work we want to do with Statistics Canada when in her very speech she spoke about the need for data? Obviously, this is a complex issue, and we need data-guiding, yet her party is challenging that piece of our legislation. Could the member respond to that?

•(1235)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I cannot answer or speak for another member of Parliament.

I will say, however, that the gathering of data nationally on the opioid issue is extraordinarily important because we do not know how many people are taking pills or injecting, what that data looks like, and how much fentanyl, carfentanil, or W series drugs there is. All of those things are components, as well as the coroners' reports.

I was here to listen to the minister this morning as she spoke very passionately, and I have a lot of respect for the work she has done.

The treatment and issues around the mental health piece are so important. It always gets pushed to the side because it is easier for short-term solutions to come to the forefront. We cannot forget that side.

If we are ever going to get to the root causes, and if we are ever going to really effect change and make a difference in an addict's life, we have to have treatment available and we have to have options. We have to do all the things that we need to do so individuals get all the supports they need.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member for South Surrey—White Rock and I share a region that is living through an appalling crisis in deaths. This issue is something that has seized the population. Everyone knows somebody who has been affected by this. There have been almost 1,000 deaths in the past year alone, and yet the government did not seem willing to do anything more than drag its feet on something that is a public health crisis.

Does the member agree with us that what we need is an immediate move toward the declaring of a public health emergency? I think both of us agree that there needs to be an expansion in addiction treatment programs. They were cut back under the former Conservative government and have not really been restored under the new Liberal government. Canadians are crying out for them to be in place so the communities can have those kinds of supports.

Finally, there was a question just a moment ago as to whether or not the Conservatives would facilitate the passage of Bill C-37, and I did not hear the member answer that. I would be very interested in hearing her response to that.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, most certainly, I support many of the members of Parliament who have come out and said that this is a national public health emergency. It needs to be elevated to really give communities the assistance they require, our first responders, as well as the awareness and the education so that people have the correct information.

I have always been a proponent of treatment of mental health and addictions. For many years I have been working and supporting detox facilities, a continuum of care, addiction precincts, and all of those things. I go back to critical thinking.

I have no particular issue with this bill, except for one. I think there are a lot of good things, but to not have communities engaged is really problematic when we look at consumption sites. I have been involved in consumption sites before, and in some areas they will work, and in other areas, different communities, it is a different strategy. There is not one fit for all.

There has to be a process and engagement from the community, law enforcement, the health community, and the federal and provincial health ministers. All of those people need to be brought to the table to see if this is an effective piece that is going to work. It may be a component in that community, or it may not be. It depends on how that data is looked at, and how many people would use those consumption sites.

• (1240)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

We can, and should, treat drug use and abuse as a health issue and not as a crime. Our government has committed to a sensible and evidence-based approach to drug policy; that approach is emphasized by the recent task force report on cannabis regulation, and it is emphasized by our health minister's actions. Those include restoring harm reduction as a key pillar of Canada's drug strategy, permitting physicians to prescribe heroin to severe drug addicts, and introducing Bill C-37, effectively repealing the previous Conservative government's attack on evidence and supervised consumption sites.

The story of that attack and how we have ultimately come to Bill C-37 begins with Insite and the former Conservative health minister's refusal to renew its exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Insite is a supervised injection clinic in Vancouver. It is North America's first government-sanctioned such facility, having receiving a conditional exemption in September 2003. Since that time, it has been open seven days a week; users are provided with clean injection equipment to use; they are monitored by staff during injection; health professionals provide treatment and support in the event of overdoses; and users are provided with health care information, counselling, and referrals to health authorities and service providers.

In the fall of 2007, a detox centre opened above Insite, named Onsite, to provide detox on demand. It is a drug-free environment, supported by addiction specialists, physicians, nurses, and peers.

Since opening, Insite has saved lives and improved health outcomes, with the support of local police as well as municipal and provincial governments.

The benefits of Insite and supervised injection facilities and the lack of any related negative impacts have been well documented in leading scientific journals, including *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet*, and the *British Medical Journal*.

An expert advisory committee's report to the former Conservative health minister concluded that there was no evidence of increases in drug-related loitering, drug dealing, or petty crime around Insite; there was no evidence that Insite increased the relapse rate among injection drug users; the police data showed no changes in rates of crime recorded in the area; and a cost-benefit analysis was favourable.

Despite all of this, that minister refused to grant a continued exemption and stated that Insite represents a failure of public policy.

Government Orders

Contrary to the claims of that Conservative minister, Insite did not represent a failure of public policy, but the Conservative minister's actions did represent a failure of decision-making in the public interest.

In fact, it was such a failure that the Supreme Court of Canada, in a unanimous nine to nothing decision in 2011, ordered the minister to grant an exemption to Insite and stated, as follows, at paragraph 133:

Insite saves lives. Its benefits have been proven. There has been no discernable negative impact on the public safety and health objectives of Canada during its eight years of operation. The effect of denying the services...to the population it serves is grossly disproportionate to any benefit that Canada might derive from presenting a uniform stance on the possession of narcotics.

At paragraph 153, the Supreme Court held that a minister must consider a number of factors in exercising discretion to grant an exemption from the CDSA, including:

...[one] evidence, if any, on the impact of such a facility on crime rates, [two] the local conditions indicating a need for such a supervised injection site, [three] the regulatory structure in place to support the facility, [four] the resources available to support its maintenance, and [five] expressions of community support or opposition.

Yet, in the face of that landmark decision, the previous Conservative administration remained wilfully blind to the evidence and continued to attack safe injection facilities.

With the introduction of then Bill C-2, the previous government ignored our Supreme Court and, in the words of the Canadian Nurses Association, created “unnecessary and excessive barriers to establishing supervised injection facilities”.

Bill C-37 would remove those unnecessary and excessive barriers. Bill C-37 would simplify the process of applying for an exemption from the CDSA for supervised consumption sites, as well as the process for subsequent exemptions.

Specifically, Bill C-37 would replace the excessive 26 criteria imposed by the Conservatives with the five factors I have reiterated, as set out by our Supreme Court. It would simplify documentation, it would require reasons for a minister's decision, and it would remove the moralizing principles regarding illicit substances.

Bill C-37 would save lives, and one need not condone drug use to want to save lives.

This is a good beginning to a modern drug policy, with public health and harm reduction front and centre.

• (1245)

In addressing the United Nations last year on April 20, our Minister of Health said:

I am proud to stand up for drug policy that is informed by solid scientific evidence and uses a lens of public health to maximize education and minimize harm.

Government Orders

That commitment to evidence is important, but it also demands that we go further. Fentanyl and illicit drug overdoses killed hundreds of Canadians in 2016. B.C. health officials and medical experts have called it a public health emergency. It is so serious that the B.C. government opened two new supervised consumption sites without waiting for federal approval. We need new solutions. The current approach, the so-called war on drugs of criminal sanctions and preaching abstinence, is not working.

In 2011, the Global Commission on Drug Policy called for an end to drug prohibition stating that government expenditures on futile supply reduction strategies and incarceration displace cost-effective and evidence-based instrument investments in demand and harm reduction.

That commission included former presidents and prime ministers of Brazil, Colombia, Greece, Mexico, and Switzerland, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and former Supreme Court of Canada judge and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour. Prohibition has failed to effectively curtail the supply or consumption of illicit drugs, and its unintended consequences can be devastating, creating a lucrative and violent black market and shifting resources from public health to law enforcement instead.

Those enforcement efforts only serve to divert problems to new geographic areas or to inadvertently promote the use of alternative and potentially less safe drugs, and the use of the criminal justice system marginalizes those who are already often at society's margins, diminishing the likelihood that they seek treatment.

Prohibition treats the very people we want to help, the victims, the users, the addicts, as criminals. Looking outside of Canada, we know there is a better path.

In 2001, Portugal decriminalized low-level possession and use of all drugs. Those caught with drugs are sent before dissuasion commissions, which include representatives from law, medicine, and social work. More than 80% of cases are dismissed without sanction, and the number of people arrested and sent to criminal courts declined by more than 60%. There has been no major increase in drug use. In fact, the level of drug use is below the European average. Adolescent and problematic drug use has decreased, and the number of deaths from drug overdoses has dropped significantly.

As Donna May, a woman who lost her daughter to overdose on August 21, 2012, said that we have to get ahead of this crisis and the fastest and most effective way of successfully accomplishing this may well be done by taking away the profit from the black market and dangerously produced counterfeit opioids by legalizing and regulating all substance use. She said that at the very least following the lead of other countries which have decriminalized drugs and substituted criminalization with a health protocol needs to be seriously considered.

I am not suggesting that I have all of the answers, but I am asking our government and this House to consider additional public health and harm reduction measures. I am asking us to work together to save lives.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is only one measure of success to be had in the opioid crisis and that is

simply to have fewer people dying. That is the only measure, and what we are seeing is an increase month over month.

When the health committee conducted an emergency study into the opioid crisis, the very first recommendation that was made with all-party support was to declare opioid overdoses a national public health emergency. This would give the public health officer of Canada extraordinary powers immediately while Bill C-37 works its way through Parliament. This call was echoed by Dr. David Juurlink, who I believe lives near the member in his riding of Beaches—East York, the keynote speaker at the Minister of Health's own opioid summit, and now by B.C. health minister Terry Lake and stakeholders across Canada.

In the face of a mounting death toll, does the member for Beaches—East York agree that we should declare a national public health emergency so that we can start saving lives today?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I hope it is an acceptable answer to give in the House to say that I do not know. I have not reviewed the evidence that the health committee took seriously.

I can say our Minister of Health has indicated some concerns about usurping provincial authority, but at the end of the day, whatever saves lives is what we ought to do.

• (1250)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know we have had quite a bit of occasion to discuss these issues and I am sure we will continue to do so. I will be giving a speech later on where I will outline more substantively my views on this.

I want to ask the member two specific questions. One is that there are many aspects of this legislation that all parties in fact agree with. There are some that we have, I think, well-grounded concerns about. Does my friend think there should be an openness on the part of the government to move forward quickly in separate form with the parts of the legislation on which there is a consensus and then have a separate debate on the sections on which there is not consensus? That would allow a more rapid response.

The other thing is I noticed he used the phrase, and I have heard others use the phrase, “supervised consumption site”, instead of “injection site”. I find it interesting when language is used which is perhaps if not inaccurate, less accurate, as part of a public debate, perhaps with the objective of creating a certain kind of impression.

If the member is in favour of more safe injection sites, which I gather he is, why not use the most clear terminology?

Government Orders

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I do not need to see a consensus in the House to move forward with parts of the legislation provided those parts of the legislation are grounded in evidence. We ought to be guided in the House by evidence.

Supervised injection versus supervised consumption is simply this: where there are drugs that are causing overdose deaths that do not require injection but it would be better for those to be consumed on site under the guidance and supervision of health professionals quite apart from injections, those drugs should be consumed on site, and it is perfectly accurate to call those sites supervised consumption sites.

[*Translation*]

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

If there is one issue on which I do not have a definite opinion, it is the legalization of simple possession, if nothing else, of all drugs in Canada. He talked about that in the media and again here in the House. This draws on what other countries are doing. As I said, if there is one issue on which I do not have a firm opinion, this is it.

Can the member tell us more about whether these measures will truly help reduce drug use, which is the ultimate goal that everyone in the House wants to achieve because we value health and we want our communities and our youth to be drug- and addiction-free?

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would say a few things in response to the member's question.

First, I pointed to evidence from Portugal, but there is evidence from other jurisdictions as well. We know the criminal sanction is not effective, specifically the criminal sanction with respect to use and small possession of drugs. It is not an effective sanction. People continue to use drugs, to abuse drugs. When we look at the international evidence, there is no substantial impact at reducing consumption or supply of drugs through the criminal sanction. What we know about the criminal sanction is that it means resources are put toward law enforcement that should go to health, so there is a displacement of resources as explained in the literature.

We also know that preaching abstinence crowds out our ability to educate about effective and responsible drug use and to encourage education. We saw it previously with the debate, and thankfully a debate where the evidence won, with respect to safe sex, and so too with the safe use of drugs. Preaching abstinence does not work, has not worked, and we need new solutions.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the constituents of my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge. Today, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

The bill is particularly important for my community and the communities in the greater Vancouver region that have been facing a crisis of such horrific and disturbing magnitude. To date, over 1,000 children, mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters have died from the opioid crisis in our region. These are not numbers. These are people

and victims of addiction, each with their own incredibly painful story.

In my riding we are facing a homelessness crisis. To live in the midst of a riding that is facing an unprecedented number of homeless and drug addicted members of the community, we know first-hand that these are folks who are battling serious mental illnesses with very few to no resources. In crafting the bill, we are doing so with an understanding that addiction is a health problem.

To quote the hon. Minister of Health, “Addiction is not a crime. Addiction is not a mark of moral failure. It is a health issue. For many, it is a mechanism to manage unbearable pain, an attempt to relieve suffering when life offers few alternatives”.

For too long we have not been paying attention to the closely tied relationship between drug addiction and mental health. Too many people in our communities are sick and our policies must begin to reflect this.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a key priority for this government. That is why on December 12, 2016, the Minister of Health, with support from the Minister of Public Safety, took action to end this crisis and introduce policies that get serious about ending drug addiction in Canada.

The bill supports our government's goal of creating a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and evidence-based approach to drug policy in Canada. It aims to balance the important objectives of protecting public health and maintaining public safety. Bill C-37 would better equip both health and law enforcement officials with the tools they need to reduce the harms associated with drug and substance use in Canada.

Specifically, the bill would improve the government's ability to support the establishment of supervised consumption sites as a key harm reduction measure; address the illegal supply, production, and distribution of drugs; and reduce the risk of controlled substances used for legitimate purposes being diverted to the illegal market by improving compliance and enforcement tools.

While all aspects of the bill are important, I would like to focus my remarks today on how the bill would modernize the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to strengthen law enforcement and the government's ability to monitor, promote, and enforce compliance. This would reduce the risk of diversion of controlled substances that are used for legitimate purposes, such as prescription opioids, to the illegal market. This is a pressing concern as the diversion of controlled substances to the illicit market contributes to problematic substance use in Canada.

The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act came into force in 1997. While it has been amended over the years, it has not kept pace with the significant changes seen in the illicit controlled substances industry and the illicit drug market. In particular, the current troubling and growing rates of opioid overdoses and deaths highlight certain gaps and weaknesses within the existing legislation.

Government Orders

Bill C-37 would modernize compliance and enforcement powers by improving inspection authorities by bringing them in line with authorities in other federal legislation. Under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, Health Canada regulates more than 600 licensed dealers who manufacture, buy, sell, distribute, import, export, and transport controlled substances for legitimate purposes. At present, Health Canada's inspectors are only able to inspect sites where authorized activities with controlled substances and precursors are taking place.

• (1255)

This bill proposes to allow Health Canada inspectors to enter places where they believe, on reasonable grounds, that activities with controlled substances or precursors are taking place. For example, Health Canada would be able to inspect establishments whose licences to conduct activities with controlled substances have been suspended or revoked to verify that illegal activities are not taking place.

To be clear, the proposed inspection authorities would not allow inspectors to enter private dwellings without the consent of an occupant or a warrant. As always, should Health Canada inspectors believe that illicit activities with controlled substances are taking place, they would refer the case to law enforcement officers.

Bill C-37 would also improve compliance and enforcement under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act by providing the Minister of Health the authority to compel regulated parties or persons importing a designated device to provide information regarding their activities. This authority could be used in only two circumstances: to verify compliance or prevent non-compliance with the act, or to address a risk to public health or public safety. Having access to timely information would alert the minister to potential diversion risks and improve the minister's ability to address a public health or safety threat. This authority is in line with other modern federal legislation, such as the Food and Drugs Act.

This bill also provides for an administrative monetary penalty scheme. Currently, Health Canada has limited options to address non-compliance within the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. Health Canada can send a warning letter, which may not be effective at resolving a non-compliance situation, or suspend or revoke a licence. However, licence suspension or revocation is often considered to be a disproportionate penalty and may not always be appropriate or in the public interest. For example, revocation of a pharmaceutical company's licence could result in a shortage of critical drugs used in medical care.

Further, not all regulated parties are issued licences under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. For example, pharmacists, health care practitioners, and hospitals are subject to specific requirements set out in regulations under the act but are not licenced per se.

The introduction of an administrative monetary penalty scheme would offer Health Canada a greater range of tools to promote compliance with the act and its regulations. For example, regulated parties could be liable to pay a fine in cases where they do not follow the required security or record-keeping procedures. While exercising this authority will require regulations, the bill provides a legislative authority to introduce an administrative monetary penalty scheme.

Another aspect of this bill would introduce a new, expedited process for the disposal of seized controlled substances, precursors, and chemical offence-related property whose storage or handling poses a risk to health and safety. The current rules related to the handling and disposal of seized controlled substances, precursors, and other drug-related property are cumbersome and complex. Law enforcement agencies must seek a court order and approval from Health Canada before they dispose of these items, which takes time. This results in large quantities of controlled substances, potentially dangerous chemicals, and other offence-related property needing to be stored for longer periods of time. This poses a risk to public health and public safety. It is also costly, particularly for law enforcement.

The new process proposed in this bill would not require a court order for the disposal of controlled substances, nor for precursors and chemical offence-related property that pose a risk to health and safety. This would therefore reduce the burden on courts, government, and law enforcement agencies.

As members can see, this integrated approach puts evidence-based public health and public safety measures at the forefront of our drug policy here in Canada. Tackling this crisis will require commitment and innovation from all levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. We must work together in solidarity to put an end to this crisis that is tearing at our communities and taking lives.

I encourage all members of this House to put saving lives and securing our communities before ideology. I ask all members to support Bill C-37, to stand up for the best interests of our communities, and be part of ushering in a new era of evidence-based drug policy.

• (1300)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that my colleague is from British Columbia, which is at the coalface of this crisis.

Back in April, British Columbia called a public state of emergency. Quite stunningly, the member's colleague for Vancouver Centre just a few months ago said that the government was not acting because this happened in British Columbia, and that if this crisis had been in Ontario, it would have acted right away.

First of all, does my colleague agree with the member for Vancouver Centre? Second, can he justify that, when we came back to the House, with this legislation that he deems is going to be so critical, the first thing we were debating was Statistics Canada?

Government Orders

• (1305)

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I cannot comment on why another member of Parliament would make a comment or what their intention is.

However, we have a crisis in B.C. What has to stop is the pointing of fingers. We have worked very closely with the provincial government to help it to put together the programs that it needs to help it overcome the challenges it faces.

Again, it is so important that we are here today talking about this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague. I look at this whole debate. What I find most interesting coming from across the way is when the members question the Government of Canada's priorities.

Would my colleague concur with me that there is not one answer? The national government needs to demonstrate leadership, and we have done that. This piece of legislation was actually brought in back in December. The Conservatives would not allow it to be passed back in December. The NDP were in favour of passing it. Only the Conservatives ultimately said no to allowing it to be dealt with in December. Now we have to deal with it today, in a very timely fashion.

Would my colleague concur with my thoughts?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I think the member meant to refer to the fact that unanimous consent was not given to expedite a bill at all stages without debate. I do not think he meant to say that we objected to the discussion of the bill at that time. I think he might want the opportunity to clarify that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That probably goes outside the category of a point of order. We are closer to the category of debate as to the facts that have been rendered to the House. Perhaps there will be another occasion where the hon. member might bring that matter up. We will go back to the hon. parliamentary secretary. I think he was essentially finished raising his question, but I will let him finish and then we will go back to the hon. member.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the essence of the question was there, just reinforcing that the Conservatives did have the opportunity to have this bill expedited, and the NDP members were supporting the inclination to do so.

Would my colleague concur that we, as a government, are very much aware of the national crisis, and we are doing what we can to make sure that this crisis is dealt with?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, I am a new MP. What I can remember is that years ago when the first consumption site in B.C. was brought in there was so much uproar against it. It was challenged over and over again.

I am a member of Parliament today, able to respond and able to actually implement this. What would have happened if we had done this years ago? Would we still be where we are today? Would we still be in a crisis situation?

The time for talk is over. That is why I am proud of Bill C-37. It is taking action when it needs to be taken.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, with respect to the claims about safe injection sites saving lives, I have read a lot of the data. What it points to is overdose interventions that have taken place at safe injection sites, so called.

I have not read any evidence on the impact of those safe injection sites on overall drug use and the possible risks that are associated with, in general, the creation of a more permissive attitude towards drug use. I am open to the information if the member is aware of such data. I would be very interested in hearing it.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, the information on safe consumption sites and the science behind it is very clear. That is just one part of the puzzle.

If we do not address mental health at a young age, that is what they turn to. This is just a piece of a puzzle in a complex equation. We need to have the means for people to go, and for them to remember that while they are there, people are trying to help them find a better way. That is part of the success of that program.

The alternative is to do nothing and double the number of deaths we see going on in my province. That is not acceptable to me. We need to move forward on this. That is why I am supporting Bill C-37.

• (1310)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and join this debate. The record will show that my colleague who just spoke, although he had some important and thoughtful comments in response to my question, did not address my specific question about the evidence. I will come back to that later in my speech.

Let me just start with a brief overview of the context of what we are debating. Certainly, we all appreciate the critical importance of this discussion. We agree throughout the House on the critical importance of action in response to the crisis that we see. It is a crisis indeed of public health, a crisis around drug use in Canada. The government has come forward with legislation with a number of different components to it, some of which we agree with, some of which we think could be done right away even without legislation. We certainly have a concern around the government's view with respect to supervised injection, with respect to the consultation process in particular envisioned by this new legislation.

I want to say at the outset that it is unfortunate that we are confronted with a piece of legislation that seeks to combine, in my view, a number of disparate and unconnected elements. They are not wholly unconnected of course. They deal with, broadly speaking, the same subject but they move in a different direction from each other. Our view of the need to move quickly on this would certainly be around some of the provisions but not around others.

Government Orders

The parliamentary secretary earlier in the debate alluded to the fact that there was an effort to get unanimous consent around this entire bill. In general, in almost every case I would be very concerned about proposals to give unanimous consent without debate to any legislation. Certainly it is up to the government to schedule that legislation in a way that reflects its priorities, but to ask for unanimous consent without debate raises some concerns. I am sure there would have been a willingness to move much faster had the government not intentionally combined in the same piece of legislation certain measures that are necessary for public safety and that we all support and certain measures that are much more controversial.

All of us are concerned about the crisis. All of us want to see action. That is why to see from the government this playing of politics, this fusing of disparate elements in one bill to try to obviously create a poison pill when we could be moving faster with action on which we agree is unfortunate, again given the urgency of the situation that we confront.

Let me now proceed to identify specifically the different sections of the bill and share my perspective on them.

This bill seeks to prohibit the importation of designated devices unless registered with the Minister of Health. We agree with that section. We think that makes sense.

The bill seeks to grant Canada Border Services Agency more powers to search packages if the CBSA has reasonable grounds to suspect that the mail contains goods that are prohibited, controlled, or regulated. This is a simple and sensible enforcement measure that again would limit the importation of certain things into Canada and we see that as a positive.

The bill seeks to expand the offence of possession, protection, sale, or importation of anything intended to be used to produce or traffic any controlled substance out of the legitimate supply chain by adding substances under schedule V. These are further changes again around the importation and enforcement area. Again, I am supportive of that.

The bill seeks to authorize the minister to quickly and temporarily add substances to a schedule under the act that the minister has reasonable grounds to believe pose a risk to the public's health and safety.

So far, there is a lot that we would find a consensus in this House around because these are measures oriented toward effective enforcement and certainly things that speak to an opportunity and an urgency of responding.

Then we have this problem that the bill calls for mechanisms that would significantly expedite the process for application to open a supervised injection site. It would limit the consultation. It would reduce the consultation window and would reduce the number of people who have to be involved in that consultation.

• (1315)

I do not support that change. It is not a helpful way of moving forward in response to this problem, and it raises other problems as well.

As much as there is the consultation piece that we need to discuss, I do not have a problem saying that I have broader concerns about the evidence around and the impact of supervised injection sites. There are legitimate questions about what actually is the most effective and compassionate response, the response most likely to save lives.

I had the opportunity to visit the safe injection site in Vancouver. I do not know how many members have had that opportunity, but it was before I was a member of Parliament. About 10 years ago, I was visiting Vancouver as a student. It might surprise members to know that even then I was very interested and engaged in public policy debates. I went to visit the area of the community where this injection site was. While I was walking in the area, I met a gentleman who was involved in the whole area of drugs. He offered to show me around the neighbourhood and to introduce me to some people. He then took me to see the supervised injection site. It was a really useful opportunity for me to get an understanding of an important public policy question and to talk directly to the people who were affected.

One question I recall specifically asking that gentleman was how he got into this, what things happened in his life that had led him down this path. I will not go into all the details, but he spoke about some of the challenges in his family, some of the ways in which drugs were normalized in the environment in which he grew up, and the kinds of relationships and interactions with his family.

It was striking to me that the most compassionate response to people in this situation was not to assume that the continuation of their use of drugs was inevitable. I do not think that is the most compassionate response. I know that those who believe in safe injection sites are motivated by compassion, but I would regard it in a certain sense as a rather pessimistic form of compassion. It assumes the response has to be one of providing access to something that is extremely dangerous and yet trying to reduce that danger as much as possible.

My honest view is that a better kind of compassion is a more optimistic sort of compassion, one that in every interaction with people suffering with the challenges of addiction and drug use seeks to provide them with opportunities and tools to stop using these dangerous substances. It is not, as one member of the government suggested, a choice between these supervised injection sites and doing nothing. There are many other alternatives. We need to work aggressively for those alternatives. Perhaps that means more investment in chemical detox facilities. Perhaps that means having a conversation about mandatory detox. I am not here to come out definitively in favour of that, but that is an option to be discussed. Perhaps it means enhancing education and early intervention. All of these are with the direction of saying that we are not going to develop a permissive attitude to something where the harm is so significant and so present.

We all have a shared motivation in what we want to see happen, but the kind of compassion that motivates my concerns around supervised injection sites is fundamentally more optimistic in what I believe is possible for people who are in these kinds of difficult situations. That is an important distinction to be drawn in this discussion.

Government Orders

•(1320)

With respect to drug policy, there is sometimes the implication from those who favour a more liberal regime with respect to drug laws that criminalization inherently entails some kind of moral judgment. I do not think that is true. The law should criminalize behaviour that is dangerous and that criminalization creates opportunities for the police to intervene. However, that does not in any way, necessarily, entail moral judgment.

That intervention, in fact, may be in the best interest of the person in terms of protecting his or her safety. It may create opportunities for legal intervention that would start the person on a road to greater awareness, greater support, and to access resources that, in the absence of this intervention, he or she might not access or know exists. I will not pretend that this happens in every case where there is a legal intervention, but I would like to believe that in a multi-pronged approach that emphasizes public health and dealing with root causes, we need to also recognize that legal intervention can play an important role in helping people go in a different direction.

I was speaking earlier about the opportunities I have had to have conversations with people who are struggling with these issues. I know one of the most important parts of this discussion is the way in which people's own families can engage with them and support them. This is an area that needs further discussion and perhaps further investment from government.

There is an organization in my community called Parents Empowering Parents. It works directly with the parents and families of those who are struggling with drug use issues. This organization is so effective because it empowers those who are necessarily right on the front lines of dealing with these problems, not because they are in some professional capacity but because they have close, intimate, personal relationships with those who are in this situation. So often family can be the critical support involved. Therefore, this is another area where further discussion and investigation is merited.

There are a few other comments I want to make with respect to the legislation. I have talked about the principles around having supervised injection sites, but what the legislation deals with specifically is the process of consultation for opening a supervised injection site. It is legitimate that the neighbourhoods, communities, and municipalities that will be affected profoundly by these decisions have a fair and full opportunity to be involved in the consultation and ensure not only that they are informed but that the consultation actually gives them the opportunity to have some say with respect to the outcome.

We should recognize that communities, neighbourhood groups, and municipalities are aware of these problems, are compassionate in their desire to respond, and to respond in a way that is most effective and appropriate for their communities. It is not reasonable to assume that we should somehow take away their power to influence the process and that this will make the situation better. Communities on the front lines of these issues are certainly made up of people who want to help, but they may also want to have input about what kind of strategy to respond to the challenge of drug use makes the most sense in the context of their communities. Community groups, mayors, and individuals would want to be part of that discussion.

I would ask members across the way to reflect on how they would feel if a supervised injection site were proposed within their immediate communities. I am sure there are some members who would be supportive of that. There are others who would perhaps not be supportive. However, I suspect that all members, if it were their families in the immediate area, would want to be aware of and given an opportunity to have some constructive input with respect to the form of response taken within that community. They might have ideas and insights that an external organization coming into the community would not have. They might know things or appreciate opportunities and resources that are not on the radar of some external organization.

•(1325)

If something like that were contemplated in my own community, I would want to ensure that I and others in my community had the fulsome opportunity to be part of the discussion.

With respect to the specific changes to the consultation framework for example, right now there is a requirement for support from the mayor of a city. Some mayors have raised concerns about the appropriateness of these supervised injection sites in their communities.

The bill would also change the consultation period, and this is an important point. When we talk about the development of a supervised injection site, something that is likely going to be in place for quite a long time, it is important to have the proper timeline for consultation upfront. The bill would change the current discretionary 90-day public consultation period to a period that is "not to exceed 90 days".

In my previous career, I was involved in public opinion research and in that context also consultation. The window given for time is already not that large a window to create opportunities for meaningful debate and discussion that would give people the opportunity to have feedback, to ensure they engage with the information and to suggest and propose alternatives. We have to be concerned that there is no minimum in the proposed new legislation on what the public consultation will look like. There is nothing to suggest the community would have to give its approval either. The implication is that the community would be informed, but it would not necessarily have meaningful opportunities for feedback at all.

Obviously there will be some disagreements about overall drug policy and about the wisdom of these injection sites. Some members of the House favour the decriminalization wholesale of all different kinds of drugs, and I do not doubt with the best intentions, but ultimately that path would be misguided.

Could we at least all agree about the importance of better engaging communities? It seems that we cannot because this legislation involves changes that would just remove the capacity for effective community engagement, and it is unfortunate.

As I said before, many provisions in the legislation are supportable, but with something that would have such a significant impact on communities, it is difficult to suggest that it should be given a pass in spite of the fact that there are certain things in the bill that are worthwhile.

Government Orders

I would like to make a point with respect to the question of whether these supervised injection sites save lives. This has been said by members across the way, and it is an important point.

A lot of the data I have looked at with respect to these sites has looked at the number of overdose interventions and makes the assumption that the overdose interventions therefore necessarily show that there is a net benefit in lives saved. What the arguments do not consider is the possibility of a more permissive environment for drug use in general, the social signal sent by this, the ease of access without the possibility of intervention but also in comparison to other possible alternatives, other policy responses which are motivated by what I have called a more optimistic as opposed to more pessimistic compassion.

I have not heard data from members that show that overall we are talking about lives saved just in that very narrow and specific sense of overdose interventions. There may be other ways to have supports within communities that can be prepared to respond to overdoses that do not involve the kind of legal exceptions that exist in a supervised injection site model.

We need to look not just at this model or nothing. We need to look at alternatives that have as their goal minimizing the use of drugs and helping people to get off drugs completely, providing them with the supports and investments they need to do it. That would provide a better alternative.

• (1330)

Certainly, if we cannot agree on that, let us at least agree on the importance of more effective consultation. If we cannot agree on the importance of more effective consultation, let us look at expediting the sections of this bill we can all agree on without getting bogged down in terms of the urgent need to respond or on the sections that do require time and sufficient debate.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member suggested that those on our side have been saying that Bill C-37 would save lives. Certainly, I am one of those speakers.

I cited the Supreme Court's unanimous judgment of nine to nothing. I believe it was paragraph 133 that stated, "Insite saves lives. Its benefits have been proven."

The member now casts doubt on that unanimous conclusion of our Supreme Court and suggests that there might be evidence that permissive and increased usage has occurred because of the safe injection clinics. Perhaps he can point us to that evidence.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member would be shocked and horrified to find that I might, in some cases, disagree with the members of the Supreme Court. However, I was much more humble than that. What I did in my remarks was raise a question. I said that the evidence I have read with respect to these supervised injection sites is specifically on this issue of overdose response, and I raised the question of whether that is sufficient to demonstrate a net benefit to society and to those who are struggling with drug use, especially when we consider the fact that there are other possible responses. That was the question. If the members of the government have evidence, perhaps contained in the Supreme Court judgment or perhaps elsewhere, I invite them to present that evidence.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member speak about interactions he has had with family members and others in the community. He mentioned an organization for concerned parents.

I think it is a fundamental mistake to not go back to the beginning of addiction for people in Canada. A lot of that addiction crosses all socio-economic boundaries. There is no designation of only young people being addicted. The middle class and people from all economic standings in life are addicted for many different reasons, partially because of the over-prescription by doctors of certain opioids that have been deemed safe by our own Health Canada, which we now know is not the case. These prescription medications are becoming a gateway, where people become addicted and then find themselves on the street. I had one such woman in my office who had two young children. Her husband had worked in a very physical type of job, found himself addicted to prescription medication, and is now homeless, living on the street, and addicted to meth and crack cocaine.

I think we need to go back to the root of addiction, which has to include detox and addictions treatment. Unfortunately, under the previous Conservative government, 15% was slashed in the budget for addictions treatment. Does this member now support an increase in the upcoming budget to address the very alarming lack of funding for detox and addictions treatment in Canada?

• (1335)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the numbers the member raised with respect to the previous government. However, I think I agree with almost everything she said about the way in which drug addiction affects many different people across different kinds of communities, certainly belying many of the stereotypes or what some people might think someone who struggles with drug addiction looks like.

There are many paths that lead people into drug addiction, and there are many paths out. I said quite concretely in my speech that I personally think it is important that we focus our efforts on looking at how we can get people out of addiction and on making those investments in treatment and detox. I think that should be our focus.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the addictions detox issue, which is, of course, predominantly a provincial responsibility.

Many times, I hear from people that safe injection sites provide a route to detox and treatment. In my former experience as a nurse, I can remember people who were desperate for support, but often we would have to tell them it was going to take six months before they would have the care they needed. At that point, we had actually lost them. People who had been very motivated, in terms of it being time to turn their lives around, missed those opportunities because of the lack of detox and rehab.

I do not understand, to be honest, when there is such a lack of detox and rehab available, whether it be in communities, remote faraway places, or at Insite, how they can be a pipeline that is as effective as some people indicate.

Government Orders

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and her work and for sharing her experience before coming to this place.

Absolutely, it is horrendous if someone is willing to take those steps necessary but does not have access to a facility that allows them to go through the process of detoxification and addictions treatment. Clearly, even if we think of it in the crudest terms of economic cost, it makes sense to make those upfront investments, given the costs later on. However, that is not the most important consideration at all. It is the effect on people's lives.

This is why our view is that the focus should be on investing in those things that allow people to effectively get on that road to complete recovery and on allowing municipalities and provincial governments to make those investments as well. What is envisioned in this legislation is moving forward with injection sites without necessarily the sign-off of the municipalities, which puts them on the hook for them financially and less able to invest at the local level in alternative programs that may actually be much more effective.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

Does the member realize that the supervised consumption site model also includes access to detox programs to help people break their addictions? That is part of the model. These facilities offer programs that give people the professional support they need to battle their addictions.

Does my colleague recognize that this is part of what supervised consumption sites offer? Does he recognize that, when these programs are available at supervised consumption sites, and when people can go to these sites rather than be relegated to the streets as they are in all but one of our Canadian communities, it is easier for them to access the professional services that can help them overcome their addictions?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

It is correct that the institutions have certain programs. However, one thing is clear.

• (1340)

[*English*]

The legal exception is still there that a person can use illegal drugs without the possibility of a legal intervention. I take the view that a legal intervention, recognizing the danger and illegality of these drugs, can be an important step in terms of bringing someone toward that path of recovery. I do not think it is enough to say that people can come here, use illegal drugs, and by the way, if they want to get well again, we have this option as well. As a society, as communities, a fully compassionate and also optimistic response is one that insists on providing the resources, the mechanisms, and every possible encouragement for people to get well again.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

[*Translation*]

Today I am proud to speak on Bill C-37, which I unreservedly support. This is an essential step in overcoming the opioid crisis that is afflicting our country.

The bill amends the Customs Act and the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, but I will actually be addressing its proposed amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

[*English*]

The changes to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act are important to our government's revision of the Canadian drugs and substances strategy, which restores harm reduction as a core pillar of Canada's drug policy. The return of this evidence-based approach to substances marks a return of our drug policy to a health matter once again.

I want to acknowledge the pain that has been experienced by so many families across our country as a result of the opioid crisis. My hope is that by passing this bill, we will be preventing further deaths from the use of opioids.

[*Translation*]

This bill gives health professionals the freedom to plan and implement harm reduction strategies to help people with substance abuse issues. It helps to de-stigmatize this disease that is taking lives every day across Canada. It will let people get medical assistance when they need it most. It is important that we all stand and support these changes.

[*English*]

First, I will address the situation in Ontario, specifically in my community.

The chief coroner for Ontario, Dr. Dirk Huyer, reports annually on deaths from opioid toxicity. If we look at the numbers, we see quickly that it is not just fentanyl that is killing people in Ontario. It is also codeine, heroin, hydromorphone, methadone, morphine, and oxycodone, sometimes mixed with alcohol.

The number of deaths is rising. In 2004, there were 246 deaths from opioid and opioid-alcohol toxicity. In 2015, that number had risen to 707 deaths.

[*Translation*]

It is estimated that one in eight deaths of Ontarians between the ages of 25 and 34 is related to opioid use. Toronto has seen a 77% increase in overdose deaths over the past decade.

[*English*]

The toll in east Toronto, where my community is located, has been high. Research cited by the South Riverdale Community Health Centre shows a disproportionately high number of injection drug users in our community and higher rates of emergency department visits due to opioid or cocaine use than in Toronto overall.

Government Orders

In 2013, a memorial was unveiled at Queen St. and Carlaw Avenue in my riding. The memorial, believed to be the first of its kind in North America, helps us to remember the people in our community who have died from drug overdoses.

● (1345)

[*Translation*]

It is a space to help families and friends heal. It encourages us to support public education and highlights the impact the war on drugs has had on the lives of people who are with us and those who have gone beyond.

[*English*]

More than 60 people contributed to the creation of the memorial, with the guidance of artist Rocky Dobe. Regarding the memorial, he stated:

But the sculpture is only a small part of this project; many more ideas have been generated, including a print exhibit, an annual memorial at the sculpture, and the simple storytelling of memories at these meetings; hopefully the project will continue to draw this community together.

[*Translation*]

At the time that it was unveiled, there were 79 names. By this summer we had 130 names, and more are being added. The stories and memories that are embodied in the sculpture should recall to all of us that work remains to be done to support our neighbours in this struggle.

[*English*]

This past summer, the sculpture was the site of a memorial for a young community peer and street outreach worker who specialized in harm reduction, Brooklyn McNeil. She was a strong advocate for safe consumption sites in Toronto.

She appeared before the Toronto Board of Health and spoke very eloquently in favour of harm reduction. I listened to her deputation last night, and her presentation hits hard. She spoke of how accidental overdoses could be prevented by safe injection sites, and she recounted her own overdose experiences.

She closed her statement saying that “respect for all members of the community is so important, especially not looking at addicts as invaders but as part of the community.” Unfortunately, she died of a drug overdose in June at the age of 22. She died before the Toronto Board of Health voted to approve three safe consumption sites in Toronto.

I do feel that Brooklyn McNeil's view of community is echoed, however, in the deputation made by the chair of the Leslieville BIA, Andrew Sherbin, who spoke at Toronto City Hall in favour of a safe consumption site in my community at the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. He stated, “We will always be a neighbourhood that welcomes people, not turns them away.”

Both of their statements strike to the very point of harm reduction, that we do not help people by turning them away. As we face a growing opioid crisis we need to look directly at this problem, we need to help people get the health care they need.

● (1350)

[*Translation*]

The bill we are discussing today helps communities to apply for exemptions to allow for the creation of safe consumption sites. It puts into place five benchmarks to be met for a safe consumption site to be approved. The benchmarks are:

[*English*]

One, demonstration of the need for such a site to exist; two, demonstration of appropriate consultation of the community; three, presentation of evidence on whether the site will impact crime in the community; four, ensuring regulatory systems are in place; and, five, site proponents will need to prove that appropriate resources are in place.

By putting these benchmarks into place, the bill returns our law to the state it was in after the Supreme Court of Canada's 2011 decision that allowed Insite to operate in British Columbia, without the overbearing, harmful, and unnecessary regulatory framework set up by the former Conservative government.

An organization in my community, as I have mentioned, the South Riverdale Community Health Centre, has applied to expand the harm reduction services they already provide. The centre is one of three that was approved by the Toronto Board of Health, and it has been operating a harm reduction needle exchange since 1998. That is about 20 years. It is one of the busiest harm reduction needle exchange programs in Toronto, and in 2015 served over 3,000 people who use drugs.

The South Riverdale Community Health Centre states in their background document relating to their application for a supervised injection site that international and Canadian research shows that such sites have benefits for individuals using the services and the community, including reducing the number of drug overdoses and deaths, reducing risk factors leading to infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis, increasing the use of detox and drug treatment services, connecting people with other health and social services, and reducing the amount of publicly discarded needles.

[*Translation*]

The centre's study of clients who seek help relating to injection drugs showed that around 30% of the clients injected in public. Ensuring needles are not discarded in public is an important health goal, and is something that this bill helps us achieve.

[*English*]

Members of my community signed a petition in support of a safe consumption site, and the wording of the petition stated as follows:

Government Orders

Leslieville is a progressive, welcoming and inclusive community. As individuals who live and work in the community, we support the establishment of a small-scale safe injection service at the South Riverdale Community Health Center (SRCHC). With a 41% increase in fatal overdoses over a 10 year period in Toronto and the existence of discarded needles in the neighbourhood, this service will not only prevent unnecessary deaths but keep the community safer. South Riverdale CHC has been operating a robust and successful Harm Reduction program for almost 20 years and this small but important addition will protect both individuals who already use the program and the community at large.

I would like to conclude with the comments that one of my constituents made at the Toronto Board of Health. Her name is Margaret Harvey, and she said, “As a community, we owe it to ourselves and to each other to make harm reduction a priority, to give the vulnerable a chance to get the help they need and to make our streets, parks, and other public spaces safer for everyone”.

So too, as a country, do we owe it to the vulnerable to make sure that they do not face barriers to access the health care that they need to keep them safe.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the importance of this legislation, and I will agree with her that there are many important measures in it. There is one area of course that we do have concerns about. More important, and I have to say this again, it was back in April 2016 when B.C. declared a state of emergency. It is now February and the Liberals have finally gotten around to putting some legislation for consideration.

I have to note that yesterday we were busy talking about Stats Canada. Can I ask the member this: How does she feel both about her colleague, the member for Vancouver Centre, who says that the government is moving too slowly and if it were happening in Ontario it would be moving faster; and second, is dealing with the Statistics Act more important than this bill, in her opinion?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that my colleague is pointing out the importance of this issue and the fact that we all see that we need to urgently address the opioid crisis. There is no question about it; that is something that we need to respond to. That is why I am so happy that we are having this debate in this place today.

I want to point out, though, that we as a government have been taking action on this issue already. We made the overdose antidote naloxone more widely available in Canada. In fact, one of the points that was brought up at the deputation that I mentioned at the board of health was that the use of naloxone had saved this woman's life once in the past. Also, we granted section 56 exemptions for the Dr. Peter Centre and extended the exemption for Insite for an additional four years.

We are taking steps, and we are now debating this legislation right here. This is what we need to do to make it happen.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across for sharing her experience in her community around this crisis. I have shared some of the experiences in my own riding of Essex today in this House, and this is something that we need to get ahead of. Unfortunately, this is coming at a time when it is almost too late because of the number of deaths that we have seen. We need to get ahead of this now and we need to move faster than we are moving on this issue.

We in the NDP welcome the changes that are being proposed here and of course will support them, but we need to do more. In my riding, there is no access to any type of treatment facility. People have to travel from southwestern Ontario up to the Toronto region in order to get treatment, and they are waiting eight days to detox.

My question for the member is around the medical experts who have been very clear that there is an alarming lack of access to publicly funded detox and addiction treatments in Canada. I want to ask the member if budget 2017 contain significant new funding for addictions treatment.

● (1355)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I was very happy to see when we are talking about the different types of actions that are required is we need to gather the experts together and get the evidence that we need to respond to this issue. This bill is one step that brings us closer to getting to those solutions. The Minister of Health also had a summit bringing together experts to discuss opioids and how we should be addressing this crisis. That is exactly what we need to get the proper answers to where we are going. We need to get evidence put together. We had that summit. That was a great place. Now we have this legislation, and we will keep moving forward to get this done.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to get to my feet in today's debate on Bill C-37. We are all terribly concerned. I am desperately concerned, as a member of Parliament from British Columbia, about the fentanyl crisis. Over 900 people died last year; I think it was 162 in December alone.

While this bill is definitely helpful, we must be able to have safe injection sites available to Canadians where we need them. I know the hon. member is not the Minister of Health, but could she outline for us the Liberal government's position on why this is not a national health emergency? A lot of us want to see a national health emergency declared.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, ultimately, this is about making sure that we are doing what we need to do to address the opioid crisis. As I mentioned, this bill would be one step in that direction. I see the need in my own community. That is why I specifically wanted to bring up the experience of South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

I mentioned some of the steps that the Minister of Health has already taken, with making the antidote naloxone more available across Canada, as well as providing an extension for the exemption for Insite for an additional four years and granting section 56 exemptions for the Dr. Peter Centre. We are working on this right now.

I understand the urgency. That is why I want to press this forward and bring everyone in the House together to agree to move the bill through as quickly as we can.

Statements by Members

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. I know that, predominantly, the focus of her speech was around the consumption sites and a new one going into her community. I guess not everybody will use a consumption site and they do not inject. They snort. They have pills.

What is the strategy under that umbrella and where is the treatment piece, in terms of her government's plan?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, the bill would be one part of the solution that we are putting together. There is, obviously, a larger question about the opioid crisis. That is exactly why having a summit and bringing experts together to try to find solutions is what we need.

The Deputy Speaker: It is just a couple of minutes before we get to statements by members. I think most of the members are here, so we are going to start just a minute or two early and give ourselves lots of time to get into question period thereafter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as of January 1, a new secretary-general, António Guterres of Portugal, took up the responsibility as head of the United Nations. The selection of Mr. Guterres as the United Nations secretary-general is a point of pride for Canada's Portuguese community, particularly in my riding of Davenport, home to the largest Portuguese community in our great nation.

On the first day of his mandate, Secretary-General Guterres launched an immediate appeal for the world to put peace first. He reminded us that the things we all collectively strived for, dignity and hope, progress and prosperity, depended on peace and that peace depended on all of us, citizens, governments, and leaders. It is an important message, especially given the recent attack in Quebec City.

As our Prime Minister has said, let us not meet violence with more violence and let us ensure that fear and hatred is met with love and compassion. Let us put peace first.

* * *

HALIBURTON—KAWARTHA LAKES

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of people and organizations from my riding that I would like to congratulate and thank for their hard work, both at home and abroad.

The township of Dysart in Haliburton county recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The 2017 world dogsled championship was held in Haliburton Forest & Wild Life Reserve, bringing competitors from a dozen countries to Haliburton county.

Haliburton's Scotty Morrison, who many will know, received the Governor General's Sovereign Medal for Volunteers.

Cam Lamport, captain of the Lindsay Muskies, was named the Ontario Junior Hockey League player of the month for the northeast conference.

Lindsay's Karleigh Toth competed at the world tap dance championships in Germany.

Downeyville's Ab Carroll qualified for the world livestock auctioneer championship, being held in Billings, Montana this June.

Wendy Babin of Nanna's Diner was named Citizen of the Year by the Kirkfield Lions Club.

I would also like to encourage every Canadian to attend the Beaverton winter carnival taking place this weekend, a great family-friendly event for all.

* * *

● (1400)

NEW BRUNSWICK ICE STORM

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, New Brunswick was hit with an ice storm that cut off electricity to more than 130,000 people across the province. Despite all efforts, many still remain without power today. Sadly, these outages have led to two deaths and dozens of hospitalizations due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

During times of struggle, we see the true resilience and resourcefulness of communities, something I saw first-hand last week while I visited warming centres in Alma and Salisbury. I would like to thank those who went door-to-door to check on our most vulnerable individuals, businesses that provided assistance to their neighbours, and the Canadian Armed Forces that mobilized and responded at the province's request.

I would also like to thank the emergency service personnel and power workers who continue to work day and night to restore power to every household.

Events like this make us all thankful for our neighbours, and no more so than in rural Canada where we can always count on someone to offer an extra blanket, a hot shower, or a home-cooked meal.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SAINTE-ROSE-DU-NORD

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 2017 marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, one of the most beautiful villages in Quebec.

In 1942, after 100 years of settlement that included progress and setbacks, this beautiful village was officially created on the north shore of the Saguenay River.

I am honoured to represent the people of Saint-Rose-du-Nord, which is known as the pearl of the fjord. These good people have put down strong roots there, and they welcome over 80,000 visitors every year. That is quite something for a village of 400 people, but it is also not surprising, considering the beauty of its landscapes and the wide range of activities it offers, in winter and summer alike.

Statements by Members

On this 75th anniversary, I want to wish everyone in Sainte-Rose-du-Nord all the best as they celebrate the anniversary of their village.

* * *

[*English*]

DR. ROBERTA BONDAR DAYS

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour the groundbreaking accomplishments of my fellow Saultite, Dr. Roberta Bondar, who is visiting Ottawa today.

Yesterday, January 30, marked the final day of the recently proclaimed “Dr. Roberta Bondar Days” in my riding. Dr. Bondar has had an influential career as a medical doctor, scientist, author, photographer, and Canada’s first woman in space.

Born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie, Dr. Bondar has received a number of Canada’s highest awards, including recognition from the Order of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mint.

The year 2017 marks the 25th anniversary of Dr. Bondar’s historic space flight. Her remarkable career inspires Canadians of all ages from coast to coast to reach for the stars and continues to inspire young women, and boys as well. I congratulate Dr. Bondar.

* * *

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to extend greetings to all my colleagues and Canadians across our country on the occasion of lunar new year. This year, as we celebrate the Year of the Rooster, we recognize the importance of hard work and seek success in our workplaces. The rooster is punctual, responsible, and dynamic.

As those with Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese heritage gather to celebrate this joyous occasion, I am reminded of how fortunate we are to live in Canada, where there is such a rich and diverse multicultural mosaic.

I encourage all my colleagues to participate in local lunar new year events, join us as we welcome in the new year, and continue our celebration for at least two more weeks.

On behalf of my family, I wish everyone a happy and prosperous Year of the Rooster.

Gong Hey Fat Choy. Xin Nian Kwai Le.

* * *

● (1405)

SHOOTING IN QUEBEC CITY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle, I rise today to condemn the shooting perpetrated at the Quebec City Islamic cultural centre last Sunday night.

[*Translation*]

This Islamophobic attack, which took the lives of six people and injured many others, was a wanton act that has no place in Canada.

Ours is a welcoming country built on values like openness, tolerance, and diversity. That is why we must oppose all forms of persecution against minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities.

I offer my condolences to the grieving families, and I want to express my solidarity with the people of Quebec City and all followers of Islam.

The people of Châteauguay—Lacolle stand with the members of our Muslim community. My thoughts go out to them, and I want them to know that they should always feel at home here in Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

CAPE BRETON

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize some very good news for Cape Breton.

Last week, I was proud to announce, on behalf of our government, the federal contribution to the creation of a \$20-million second berth in Sydney Harbour for the cruise ship industry. This is following the \$67 million that we announced last fall for the Cape Breton Highlands National Park and the Cabot Trail.

I would also like to recognize the member for Cape Breton—Canso for his announcement last week on the \$1.5-million upgrade to another popular tourist attraction, the Glace Bay Miners Museum. These investments show that our Prime Minister and our government is making tourism and job creation a priority.

Speaking of announcements, Mr. Speaker, you may recall that 10 years ago today we made the announcement of \$400 million for the Sydney tar ponds, to clean up the toxic site, which I can inform the House is now a beautiful park enjoyed by all residents.

Stay tuned, because the government will be announcing more investments in the wonderful island of Cape Breton.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to bid a happy retirement to one of the longest-serving fire chiefs in the Ottawa Valley, Chief Terry McHale of the Douglas Fire Department.

Terry has served with the Douglas Fire Department continually since 1972, a 44-year commitment to his community.

After briefly serving as chief in 1978, Terry took on the responsibility full time in 1987, and held the position for the last 30 years until his reluctant retirement in December.

This will be a big change for the township of Admaston/Bromley, as Terry is the only fire chief many residents have ever known.

Statements by Members

Terry leaves a strong legacy of public service and community leadership, and very large shoes to fill for his successor.

I look forward to seeing Terry working at his other job as a small business owner and operator, a job which he has held alongside his 44 years at the fire department.

I thank Chief McHale for his service. He is a fine example of true dedication and service to our community. I wish him and his wife Evelyn a happy and relaxing retirement from firefighting. He has certainly earned it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 29, I had the pleasure of representing the Minister of Natural Resources of Canada to announce in my riding a \$19-million investment in two innovative projects in the forestry sector.

Fortress Specialty Cellulose will be using birch for the production of dissolving pulp. Birch is an abundant resource that has been more or less neglected until now. Thanks to this technological breakthrough, we can start to capitalize on species of trees that were previously not profitable. The Papier Masson Mill is introducing a new process to produce densified wood fibre to be used in the production of wood-plastic composites used in various products.

Our government believes in the forestry industry. This is also good news for the environment, for job opportunities in rural areas, and for maintaining jobs.

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COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot rise today without mentioning last Sunday's tragedy. We are all at a loss for words.

I had planned on first saying that it is an honour to rise for the first time this year on behalf of my constituents in Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. My riding is enriched by its people, as are Quebec and Canada.

I rise to remind everyone that our community organizations need help throughout the year and that every contribution, donation, and action counts. Our community organizations hold us together, especially in difficult times. I want to thank those who work tirelessly throughout the year and are motivated every day by a sense of solidarity, support and compassion.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another year is under way, and like any new year, Canadians have made their resolutions in the hope of improving their lives.

The Liberals, however, have a resolution of their own: to create as many taxes for Canadians as possible.

Unfortunately, small business owners continue to bear the brunt of Liberal taxation. Now the Liberals claim that some small businesses, like campgrounds, are too small and should be paying more than three times as much tax as other small businesses. This does not make sense and it is not fair.

In my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, small businesses are the very lifeblood of our rural lifestyle. With this new job-killing carbon tax and our already outrageously high hydro prices, many businesses cannot survive more Liberal tax grabs.

The government needs to start supporting our small businesses, instead of driving them out the door.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the beginning of the lunar new year. It is also the Chinese new year, one of the most important celebrations for several thousands of my constituents in Brossard—Saint-Lambert. I extend my best wishes for a Year of the Rooster that will be filled with achievements and bring health and joy.

[*English*]

During this week's celebrations, we welcome the arrival of the Year of the Rooster, an animal that symbolizes honesty, brightness, and ambition. Considering my Portuguese origins and how important the rooster is in our folklore, I will add that love, of one another, of family, of community, is also part of the symbolism this year represents.

[*Translation*]

On this occasion, I hope we will take the time to recognize the incredible contributions to our country made by Chinese Canadians.

I would also like to say that our thoughts are with the families so tragically bereaved in Sainte-Foy on Sunday evening.

[*English*]

In joy, as in sorrow, together we are stronger.

* * *

DESNETHÉ—MISSINIPPI—CHURCHILL RIVER

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, young men and women in my riding are eager to learn and acquire skills to serve Canada.

Cora Mirasty from La Ronge is a student of medicine in Prince Albert.

Tye Gardiner from Île-à-la-Crosse is a student at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies in Saskatoon.

Alexis St. Pierre from La Loche is a student at the University of Saskatchewan, in geology.

Dean Poitras from Meadow Lake is a young man who joined the Canadian Armed Forces to serve his country.

Young people in my riding serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and in the RCMP. They are also paramedics, construction workers, farmers, electricians, nurses, teachers, business owners, and much more.

They contribute to making our communities safer, healthier, and more prosperous. I am proud to stand today to pay tribute to all my constituents who make Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River a beautiful place.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Liberal member for Beaches—East York came out in favour of legalizing all drugs; that is, all dangerous, deadly, and addictive drugs. We know that street drugs tear families apart and ruin their lives.

The member made the argument that the criminal aspect of drugs stigmatizes the users and makes them less likely to seek help. The problem is that there is no proper help to be offered to addicts seeking it.

Across the country we are hearing that, when drug addicts finally decide to take the steps to seek treatment, there are no beds available to them.

In the midst of an opioid crisis, it is irresponsible for any member of Parliament to be advocating for the legalization of all life-ruining drugs.

The message is becoming quite conflicting. The Liberals need to redirect their focus and ensure that prevention, education, and treatment are made their priority.

* * *

CANADA'S FIRST FEMALE ASTRONAUT

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago yesterday, the NASA space shuttle *Discovery* landed at Edwards Air Force Base after spending eight days in the vacuum of space. Aboard was Dr. Roberta Bondar, Canada's first female astronaut, an accomplished neurologist born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie.

Returning to earth, Dr. Bondar led an international team of NASA scientists studying the human body's ability to recover from exposure to space. For her ground-breaking research, she received the NASA Space Medal and was inducted into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

Since then, Roberta has worked as a physician, researcher, scientist, photographer, and educator. Dr. Bondar is a role model for all Canadians. I am proud to have her as a constituent and a friend, to say nothing of the fact that we graduated from the same high school.

Mr. Speaker, shortly you will have the honour to welcome her to Parliament. Today we all celebrate her historic contributions to science and to Canada.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1415)

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister broke the Conflict of Interest Act. It is obvious that he thinks that these kinds of rules do not apply to people like him, but it is not just this law that he broke. He also broke his own open and accountable government rules on ethics, and we only know about this because he was caught.

What possible explanation does the Prime Minister have for his conduct?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): As we know, Mr. Speaker, this was a personal family vacation with an old friend. As I have said many times, I am working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to answer all questions relating to this.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the Prime Minister does not get to have a private, privileged conversation with Mary Dawson. He is accountable to the House and to Canadians.

This has become a huge distraction for the Prime Minister and it has taken his focus away from what matters the most, which is creating jobs. It is obvious to everyone that his focus needs to be on jobs and the economy, not on damage control for one self-inflicted wound after another.

Why did the Prime Minister put himself in this position in the first place?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we remain focused on growing the middle class and supporting those working hard to join it.

In our first year, we lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. We brought in the Canada child benefit that gives more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families by doing less for the wealthiest families. We are focused on investments in infrastructure that is going to create good jobs now and opportunities for small businesses in our communities to thrive in the coming years. We are investing in research and innovation in a broad range of things to make sure that Canadians have good jobs now and well into the future.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister talked to the Aga Khan about this next issue, but I would like him to answer my question.

The Prime Minister only has two ways to balance the budget, and those are getting his spending under control or raising taxes. We know he is not going to do the first, so he is going to do the second and the latest target is health and dental benefits. That proposed new health tax means that most families will pay an additional \$1,000 in taxes, many will lose their benefits entirely, and they will be left vulnerable.

Oral Questions

Is the Prime Minister seriously going to put a tax on the health and dental plans of millions of Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Our approach, Mr. Speaker, has been on lowering taxes for the middle class. The only taxes raised were the ones on the wealthiest 1%, which that opposition party voted against.

We are looking at how we are going to help Canadian families get through the challenges they are facing and create opportunities for their children and their grandchildren to thrive and succeed. This is the focus we have: growth for the middle class and help for those working hard to join it. That is what we are going to stay focused on.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians are finding out through the media that the Prime Minister may actually tax their health and dental plans. People rely on these for prescriptions and much-needed health programs. This would leave millions of people potentially without insurance and vulnerable.

Could the Prime Minister focus on the economy and answer the question? Is he seriously going to put a tax on the health and dental plans of millions of Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2017 is coming up, and we are looking at ways within that budget to help Canadians invest in their future, to lower the costs of the everyday goods and pharmaceuticals they need. We are focused on how we can help Canadians succeed and thrive in the coming years. That is the focus of budget 2017. That is what we are working hard to deliver, as we promised to Canadians in the middle class and those working hard to join it.

* * *

● (1420)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's policies did not create any jobs before the new U.S. administration was elected, and now it is going to be much more difficult to do so.

According to the National Bank, the measures proposed by the President of the United States could reduce our exports by 10% and plunge us into a recession. The Prime Minister may not be worried, but Canadians are.

Can the Prime Minister tell Canadians how he plans to protect jobs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the arrival of the new administration and even before that, we have been committed to demonstrating just how integrated the Canadian and U.S. economies are. Our ambassador and my office staff who are in direct contact with the United States are helping us to do that.

Canada is the top export destination for 35 U.S. states. Millions of jobs on both sides of the border depend on the free flow of goods, services, and people. We are going to continue to present these arguments to the Americans.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States has banned access to anyone if they happen to come from a number of Muslim countries. A Canadian ally is blocking access to its country to individuals based on their religion and place of birth.

The Prime Minister talks about the importance of standing up to intolerance and racism. Why is he refusing to denounce this policy that breaches fundamental human rights and that will inevitably have consequences for Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the two preceding questions demonstrate the important double role that this government has. We need to make sure we are protecting Canadian jobs and growing the economy by having a constructive working relationship with our most important trade partner and ally. We are also standing up for Canadian values and principles. This is what Canadians expect of us, and that is what we have demonstrated over the past days as we have stood loudly and clearly for the openness, for the welcoming, for the compassion, for the strength that Canadians expect of all of us.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but it is always the role of a Canadian prime minister to stand up to racism and hatred.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister expects to meet with the President of the United States sometime in the next few days. Canadians have been clear: the order against Muslims is completely unacceptable.

Will the Prime Minister speak out on behalf of Canadians and denounce the anti-Muslim order when he meets with the American president, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their Prime Minister to always be there to stand up for our values and principles and to show that openness, compassion, and generosity are the best ways to protect ourselves and promote our values and our strong and united communities. That is exactly what I will always do. I am here to defend Canadian values, and I will always do so loudly and clearly.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no more words, enough is enough. That is too easy. It is time to take action.

The Prime Minister has repeated ad nauseam that 2015 would mark the last election under the current system. However, recently he has seemed to back out of his formal and solemn commitment.

Can the Prime Minister finally admit that he has broken his promise and betrayed his commitment?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, we have consulted Canadians from coast to coast to coast, be it through MyDemocracy.ca, the outstanding work of the MPs on the special committee, or direct conversations with thousands of Canadians.

What we found is that many people have different perspectives. A lot of people want our democracy to be improved. We will continue to work toward securing a healthy and well-functioning democracy for Canadians.

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's failure to answer speaks for itself.

The Prime Minister used to love to say that 2015 would be the last election under first past the post, but he will not say it any more, and neither will his newly minted minister for democratic reform. Will the Prime Minister publicly call for his new minister to begin finally drafting legislation to change the voting system, or now that he is Prime Minister, does he no longer feel it is important?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of our democracy and they are always open to improving it. We are working to make sure that our values and principles shine through in everything that is done in this House and everything that we do to represent them well.

I was extremely encouraged by the great outreach and the great response from a broad range of Canadians, in many different ways, on improving our democracy. We look forward to working with Canadians to continue improving our democracy in the years to come.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our population is part of our democracy, and that is why changing something like that has to be done through a referendum for our democracy.

[Translation]

The economic challenges associated with our main partners, the Americans, are considerable. In the U.S., the President said that he wants to lower taxes and cut bureaucratic paperwork that he deems useless.

How will Canada respond? What is the plan? We need more than words. What plan will we use to help our businesses and to keep our jobs at home, in Canada?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will engage with the Americans so that we can continue to work with them. Of course we have plans here in Canada that will help our economy and improve the situation in the future. The tax situation for the middle class will be good, but we will also make investments to improve our future growth. That is our plan for Canada and the middle class.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just before the holidays, officials from the Department of Finance were forecasting a huge deficit until 2055. There is a solution. It is not that

they forgot to count things, it is that the Conservatives will come back and balance the books before that date.

We are very concerned by what is happening. If people spend more money than they have, one day the banks will come along looking for the keys to their cars and houses. The Liberals seem to think that money grows on trees. How will we be able to deal with that? Reckless spending is not the solution. We have to keep creating jobs at home. It is not enough to raise taxes, as they are so used to doing. How are they going to handle it?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance report says that our economy is viable in the long term. The report also says that it is very important to make investments in order for our economy to improve. That is exactly what we will be doing. The report does not take our investments into account, nor the rate of growth we will achieve with our government's program. We will therefore continue with our program for the economy in order to improve the situation, now and in the long term.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has responded to a formal Order Paper question asking him to define the middle class:

...it is not possible to pin down a specific income range that would capture everyone who is in the middle class. ...Canada has no official statistical measure of what constitutes the middle class.

Now we understand why the Liberals' middle-class tax plan gives an executive earning \$200,000 a year \$800, while giving a worker earning \$45,000 a year nothing, nothing except a carbon tax on gas, home heating, and groceries.

How can the Minister of Finance help the middle class when he openly admits he does not know what it is?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact what I would like to tell the member opposite is we know the middle class is all those people who were left behind by the previous government, all those people who feel like they have not had an increase in pay in the last generation. We know that the people who are feeling like they are struggling to get by and who need—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. I am having difficulty hearing the answer. I know that all members want to hear the answer.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as I said, for all those left behind by the previous government, all of those people who have not felt like they have had a real pay raise for the last generation, what we did for them was we lowered their taxes: the average individual of the nine million people, \$330 less in taxes; the average family, \$540 less in taxes. For those who have families, for those nine out of 10 families, there is significantly more money to raise their children.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, left behind by the previous government? I seek the permission of the House to table the chart I have in front of me which shows that incomes for the median, for the middle class in Canada did fall dramatically under the previous Trudeau administration, stayed largely stagnant, and then skyrocketed under the previous Conservative government.

Do members know where I got that chart? It was the very first chart in the very first budget of that finance minister. If the minister does want to help the middle class, why does he not start by reading the chart in his budget, and follow the examples of his predecessors?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about the real numbers with the member opposite.

For the nine out of 10 families who got the Canada child benefit, they are, on average, \$2,300 better off after tax for their families. For the most impoverished, the single women living on a low income, \$6,400 after tax better off. That is not to consider the tax decreases for the middle class.

We are moving forward on a plan to make a real difference for the future of Canada, a real difference for middle-class Canadians, and a real difference for those people who are really struggling to get by. *[Translation]*

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Finance wants to talk about real numbers, I have a good number for him: 13 million.

Thirteen million Canadians may end up paying more tax if, God forbid, the government decides to tax health and dental insurance. In addition to those 13 million workers, it will affect family members too for a total of 24 million Canadians who could be affected by this bad Liberal decision.

Earlier, the Prime Minister twice refused to tell us if he will be imposing this tax or not.

Can the minister tell us if he will be taxing Canadians more, yes or no?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our first move was a significant tax cut for the middle class.

We also looked at how we can continue to have an effective, responsible, and fair system, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We will look at ways to change our tax system to make things better for the middle class. That is our real goal.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the numbers are telling us is that Canadians will have to pay more.

Unfortunately, if the government went ahead with this new tax on dental and health insurance, families would have to pay

\$2,000 more. Then we have the Liberal carbon tax, at \$2,500, not to mention CPP increases, for another \$2,200.

That is \$6,700 more that Canadians have to pay because of the Liberals, and you think that is a good thing?

The Speaker: I would like to remind the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent to address his comments to the Chair. I do not think he was speaking to me.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our program is intended to help the middle class.

We started by cutting taxes for the middle class. Our program is to help the middle class and those who seek to join it. That is also what we are seeking to achieve as we continue to ensure that our system is effective, accountable and fair.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. President's executive order on immigration is a violation of refugee rights and human rights.

We no longer have the assurance that refugees will be welcome in the United States or that they will be treated fairly. The Safe Third Country Agreement that we have with the U.S. was based on such an assurance.

The question I have for the government is simple: will Canada immediately suspend our Safe Third Country Agreement with the United States?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a lot to be proud of with respect to how we welcome refugees and open our hearts to those seeking protection and sanctuary. We are proud of the fact that we have one of the most generous and compassionate refugee systems in the world. We will continue that proud tradition and the conditions of the safe third country agreement will continue to be met.

● (1435)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we must condemn discrimination whenever it arises, but words without action are meaningless. It is time to take some real action to address the Trump discriminatory immigration ban.

Will the government lift Canada's caps on refugees, work with our global partners to help resettle those abandoned by the U.S., and immediately suspend the safe third country agreement, or will Canadians just be left with empty words?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of the fact that we resettled more than 40,000 Syrian refugees in 2016 and our immigration levels plan more than triples the number of privately sponsored refugees in 2017. That more than triples the level under the previous government.

We will continue to have a robust compassionate and generous refugee system.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are losing confidence in their government and our democracy because of this Prime Minister's conduct and disregard for the ethics rules.

Accepting a helicopter ride to get to the Aga Khan's private island was irresponsible enough, but now we see that the Prime Minister thinks he is above the law and is refusing to respect the ethics rules in place.

Could someone please explain the meaning of ethics to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been previously stated, the Prime Minister was on a family vacation with a long-time friend. The Prime Minister is ready to respond to any questions the commissioner might have.

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in defence of his indiscretions, the Prime Minister claimed he was visiting a lifelong friend during his new year's vacation. That defence does nothing to alleviate the responsibility to follow section 12 of the Conflict of Interest Act. The law is clear: the Prime Minister is forbidden from boarding a private aircraft in a circumstance like this.

Will the Prime Minister finally take responsibility for his actions and admit that he broke the law?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been previously stated time and time again, the Prime Minister was on a personal vacation with a long-standing friend whom he has known for a very long time. As has also been stated time and time again, the Prime Minister is ready to respond to any questions the commissioner might have.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie seems to have taken a page out of the Prime Minister's playbook when it comes to lavish spending. She has used the ministerial car service 55 times to return to her riding. Everyone on this side of the House knows that an expense that is technically legal is not necessarily ethical.

In this new year, will the government members finally get their priorities straight and stop picking the pockets of Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, I represent the riding of Compton—Stanstead. It is impossible for me to travel by plane or train, as many of my colleagues do, so, yes, I use a car service to get home to my riding.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Minister of International Development has been using her chauffeur-driven ministerial limo to travel back and forth from her riding in Sherbrooke. The full expense for the 55 trips was charged to the Department of Foreign Affairs. Can the minister confirm what international development project she was engaged in in Sherbrooke, or is she just another limousine Liberal who has been caught using taxpayer funds to fund her own personal entitlements?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of my colleagues here in the House can use government points and funds to travel between their ridings and the House of Commons, or Parliament.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, President Trump has decided to eliminate funding for organizations that provide family planning services, including abortion. This will jeopardize women's reproductive health and their right to control their own bodies. The Netherlands has called on Canada to create an international fund to compensate for President Trump's order.

The Minister of International Development and La Francophonie has said that she is open to the idea. She must now show leadership. What is her plan? How much and when does she plan to contribute to this international fund?

● (1440)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, abortion is about rights, health, and development. Women have the right to choose, and young women should be in school. We must put an end to violence against women, child marriage, teen pregnancy, and dangerous abortions.

I can assure the House that women and girls will be at the heart of our priorities and that sexual and reproductive health will be a major component in the new international development policy. It will include sex education for girls and boys, contraception, family planning, and safe abortions.

Oral Questions

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States has just blocked funding for any international organization that even mentions abortion. The consequences of this decision are monumental for women's health. Will Canada reiterate its support for women's access to reproductive health care at home and abroad? Will Canada condemn Trump's attack on women's rights?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been going through consultations for the last year, and I can assure members that it is a profound consensus here in Canada and globally that sexual health and reproductive rights are a priority. I can assure the member that it will be a major element in our new international assistance policy and that yes, we will support sexual education, contraceptive supplies, family planning, safe abortion, and obviously, maternal health and the health of newborns.

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HEALTH

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need only to turn on the news to see the devastating effect that the problematic use of fentanyl and other opioids is having in our communities. Last year, in British Columbia alone, more than 900 people died from overdose, an 80% increase from 2015. This tragic crisis continues to move eastward, with increasing drug seizures of fentanyl and carfentanil across the country.

My question for the Minister of Health is this. What is this government doing to turn the tide on this national public health crisis?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam said, we are in the midst of a national public health crisis in Canada, and we must continue to respond in a way that is collaborative, compassionate, comprehensive, and evidence based.

In December, we introduced Bill C-37 in this House in order to ease the burden on communities that wish to open supervised consumption sites, while putting stronger measures in place to stop the flow of illicit drugs. Canada needs this action now. I call on all members of this House to support this very important legislation without delay.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how many Yazidi victims of genocide have been welcomed to Canada as government-sponsored refugees since November 2015?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has proven to be a global leader in welcoming refugees and those seeking protection to Canada. We are proud of the fact that each and every member of this House supported resettling survivors of Daesh in Canada. Our plan and our operation is already under way, and I will provide an update to this House very soon.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister might be new in his role, so I will refresh him on what these people are going through. They are victims of genocide. They are survivors of sexual slavery. They are the most persecuted people on this planet and are being wiped off the face of the earth.

In 2015, bringing 25,000 refugees to Canada was just a matter of “political will”. Why will the government not tell anybody how many Yazidis it is going to bring to Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the previous government in terms of bringing refugees to Canada.

We are proud of our record. We will stand on our record, and we are proud of the fact that Canadians continue to be generous to those seeking protection. Our operation to bring victims and survivors of Daesh is under way, and I will provide an update to this House very soon.

* * *

● (1445)

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has opened the door for a Chinese takeover of a Canadian electronics company, despite our national security experts warning against this. The deal, and I quote the experts, “would undermine the technological edge Western militaries have over China”.

The first duty of the current Liberal government should be to protect Canadians, so why is it selling off our secrets to China? Why is it outsourcing Canadian security interests to the Chinese government?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that this government will not compromise national security. Let us be clear on the facts. The government did not overturn a cabinet order. We consented to an order from the court requiring us to conduct a new review in accordance with the law, and all of this is clear from the public court record. Following our review, we will take whatever action is necessary to protect Canada's national security. Our action will always be based on the full record of the advice and evidence from the national security experts.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says that, but he is doing the exact opposite. It is no secret that the Liberal government has a growing love affair with China, courting its billionaires at fundraisers, but it is not just the case of a statue of the Prime Minister's father that is at stake. It is the mad rush into the arms of China. The Liberals are ignoring our own security experts on this business transaction. This clearly undercuts our technology and our military. Why are the Liberals turning their backs on the security experts? Why are they turning their backs on the national interest of this country?

Oral Questions

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate our position. We will never, ever compromise our national security, and we will always listen to the advice and guidance given by our experts with respect to national security.

We also increased transparency by publishing national security review guidelines and information on national security reviews in the ICA annual report. This will help investors and Canadian businesses in planning investments, while maintaining our authority to take action to protect national security.

We are open and transparent, and we always advance our national interests.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government campaigned on the promise to immediately restore public voices in the assessment and approval of resource projects. It committed that only communities can grant permission for these projects, yet 15 months after taking office, the Liberals have approved pipelines, LNG plants, and major dams using Stephen Harper's retrograde process.

How many more resource projects will the Liberals approve using the Conservatives' failed process?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to an open, fair, inclusive, and transparent process for decisions on major energy projects.

Consistent with our campaign commitment, we have established an expert panel to conduct a review of the National Energy Board's structure, role, and mandate.

The panel will provide a report to the minister on May 15, 2017. The findings and recommendations in that report will serve to inform policy or legislative measures to modernize the National Energy Board.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is once again trying to use smoke and mirrors on the energy east file.

The NEB has appointed three new panelists who are loudly proclaiming that the review process will start over from square one. However, despite this smokescreen, we can still clearly see that the Prime Minister is going back on his election promise to conduct an in-depth review of Stephen Harper's assessment process, which discredits all findings and results ahead of time.

The question is quite simple: when will we see real change?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that this project must be subject to a review process that instils confidence in Canadians. We recognize that the new energy east review panel has decided to restart the project review process.

• (1450)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned today that the Liberals' plan to sole-source the Super Hornet is going to cost taxpayers between \$5 billion and \$7 billion to buy an obsolete fighter aircraft.

The Prime Minister campaigned on purchasing the Super Hornet for \$65 million each, but that number is going to more than double and could actually exceed \$300 million a plane.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing for our air force, for our taxpayers, and stop this political purchase and immediately proceed to launch an open and fair competition to replace our CF-18s?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that our men and women in uniform have the best aircraft they can possibly have to do the work expected of them.

We are in negotiations with the government of the United States and with Boeing. We are looking to get the best deal we possibly can, looking at price, looking at capability, looking at economic benefits, and we are going to do just that for this interim measure.

We are looking at the Super Hornet aircraft, but we will also be looking at a long-term procurement strategy to make sure that our men and women have the best possible—

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we want the best aircraft, we should not buy jets that are completely outdated.

The government has admitted that acquiring the Super Hornets will cost Canadians a lot of money. We now know that the first aircraft is expected to be delivered in 2019. If resources are truly lacking, this acquisition will not make a difference.

Information obtained from the United States indicates that this useless purchase will cost Canadians between \$5 billion and \$7 billion. That is a lot of money.

When will the Liberals be honest and transparent with Canadians and tell them how much the jets will cost? Is it \$5 billion, \$6 billion, \$7 billion, \$8 billion, \$9 billion, or \$10 billion? We do not know.

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are in discussions with the government of the United States as well as with Boeing. We want to get the best possible price we can.

To negotiate in public would be totally irresponsible, but we will make sure that what we get will be an investment for Canadians from an economic perspective as well as in terms of what our men and women in uniform need to do the job expected of them.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will first congratulate the minister for her new responsibilities on a file she knows well.

The Russian-backed war on Ukraine has entered a deadly new phase, with indiscriminate rebel artillery barrages. The foreign affairs committee is just back from Ukraine and nearby countries, which fear similar Russian aggression. It is clear that Ukraine wants Canada to maintain sanctions on Russia, to restore satellite battlefield data, and to extend Operation Unifier.

Can the minister tell us when Operation Unifier will be officially extended?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Thornhill for his question, and I look forward to working with him on this file, which he knows very well as well.

It will be no surprise to members of the House to hear from me that our government stands firmly in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We are very much aware that the annexation and invasion of Crimea was an illegal act. We say that to the world and we say that to Russia, and we will continue to say that.

On Operation Unifier, that is something that is being reviewed, together with my colleague, the Minister of National Defence.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that research and innovation are critical to the future success of our agricultural sector. This sector drives one in eight Canadian jobs and adds well over \$100 billion to our GDP. Investing in research and innovation will help maintain our competitive edge and ensure that Canada is a global agricultural leader for years to come.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell us about our recent investments in agricultural research?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to recently announce, with my counterpart from Saskatchewan, \$3.5 million for 24 livestock and forage research projects. That is on top of an announcement earlier this month of \$7.7 million for 46 crop-related research projects.

Our government understands that research in agriculture is key to staying on the cutting edge. These investments will help create growth and put money in the pockets of our farmers and ranchers.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government keeps saying that it blames no one for implementing the Phoenix pay system. However, last year, the minister actually ignored the warnings issued in a number of screening risk assessment reports.

How many Canadians have to confront the Prime Minister directly, as we saw last week, for example, before the minister finally admits that she is entirely to blame for the Phoenix pay system fiasco?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from our perspective, the ongoing problems with respect to Phoenix are totally unacceptable. That is why we are putting so many extra measures in place to deal with the problem. We are determined to fix this problem, and we will. We are working with the unions, we are working with the employees, and we are taking every measure we possibly can to get the system fixed. We are also making sure that employees who are impacted by this can access emergency pay.

We are doing everything we can. It is totally unacceptable that employees are impacted by this, but we are going to fix the system.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our border communities rely on shared medical services for urgent medical care in the United States. These life and death health emergencies include care for pregnant women, new mothers, and newborn infants at risk. Under the American travel ban, Canadians are at risk of dying in an ambulance waiting at the border.

Can the Prime Minister assure us today that there will be no delay or no denial of these critical health emergencies, or will we wait for somebody to die?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have received assurances from the United States that Canadian citizens and Canadian permanent residents with valid permanent resident cards will not be denied entry into the United States as a result of this executive order. We have been continually engaged with our counterparts since the executive order came out. We commit to continue to work with our American counterparts and to inform the Canadian public. We will monitor the situation closely and make sure we stand for Canadian values.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for Canada Post.

During the campaign, we made a pledge to review Canada Post to ensure that it is providing quality service at an affordable cost. This is a significant issue for the residents of my riding, which is home to the largest Canada Post distribution hub in the country.

Routine Proceedings

Could the minister please provide an update to the people of Mississauga East—Cooksville as to what our government is doing to ensure a sustainable future for Canada Post?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hard-working member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for the question. Our government suspended the conversion of community mailboxes and undertook a two-phase review of Canada Post. In December, I received the report on Canada Post from the standing committee and I thank the members of that committee for their hard work consulting Canadians from coast to coast to coast. I am reviewing the report and in the spring will announce a new plan to meet the needs of Canadians.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Winnipeg, the Prime Minister doubled down and repeated the same comments that he made in Saskatoon. Rather than funding community-led initiatives for aboriginal youth, he basically said, “Ottawa knows best, I know best”. What was his solution? Aboriginal youth really only want and need a place to store their canoes and paddles.

I will again ask the Prime Minister to retract these condescending and out-of-touch comments.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that communities have the say in setting the priorities and the things that need investment in their communities, but when it comes to things do do with youth, we want to hear from the youth. The youth are telling us about language, culture, and the ability to be competent on the land, to get a secure personal cultural identity. We know that affects their education, their health, and their economic outcomes. That is what the youth are telling us and that is what we are going to do.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last year, the Prime Minister went to Washington to meet with President Obama. They took nice pictures, but pictures do not put food on the tables of our agricultural and forestry producers in Quebec. The Prime Minister buckled to the Americans by allowing them to breach NAFTA as they see fit. Today, a meeting is imminent: the Prime Minister will be meeting with Donald Trump in the United States.

Will the Prime Minister stand up this time and defend Quebec producers and their businesses?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has an outstanding track record in serving Canadians well when it comes to trade. Under our government, Canada signed CETA. In December 2015, our government had the U.S. labelling law scrapped. We have obtained greater access to the Mexican and Chinese markets for beef. We have obtained greater access in China for canola producers. We continue to work tirelessly to grow the middle class. We will vigorously defend our national economy—

● (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Montcalm.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will give the Prime Minister an opportunity to redeem himself and answer the question.

The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Belgium are just a few of the countries that have taken a stand against Donald Trump's order banning refugees from around the world and people from seven Muslim countries. Those countries openly and unequivocally condemn the order. Will the Prime Minister follow suit rather than continue to wallow in diplomatic complacency?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our record of being open and welcoming to refugees and immigrants as a way to meet our international obligations, but also viewing immigration as a great ingredient for our economic prosperity. We will continue that tradition. We will make sure that we continue to be open to people and ideas. We will continue to thank Canadians for their generosity and continue to welcome Syrian and other refugees.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: January 30 marked the 25th anniversary of the return from space of Canada's first female astronaut. I would therefore like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Dr. Roberta Bondar.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by expressing my shock and horror at the terrorist act committed in the Quebec City mosque. I want to express my sincere condolences to the families of those who were killed or wounded.

[*English*]

As I stand in this place for the last time, I naturally do so with mixed emotions. Having had a few days to think about it, I also believe that this China assignment is the perfect job for me. I am grateful to the Prime Minister for his confidence.

Routine Proceedings

I am going to Beijing with a great teammate, Nancy, my wife of 36 years. I think she deserves applause, if only because she has had to put up with me for 36 years. Nancy will be a great partner, but she also has her life in Canada. She, like I, will miss our three sons. She will spend part of her time in Canada, but she will be a huge asset as well in China.

• (1505)

[Translation]

I am also pleased to share this opportunity with the member for Saint-Laurent, who has been a colleague of mine for decades. We met as classmates at university in Montreal, and we served together as MPs and ministers. I would be very pleased if we were to remain colleagues as ambassadors. I would enjoy that, but it may not come to pass. It is a mystery. We will find out soon.

[English]

Passing right along.

[Translation]

I would also like to thank the citizens of Markham for their support in six elections and over 16 years, as well as the volunteers who have given me their strong support over the years. No politician is better than his assistants, so I would like to extend a big thank-you to my assistants, past and present, for their loyalty and their excellent work.

[English]

I know that members from all parties will agree with me that Ali, Bernie, Lisa, Kyle, and Kerry have all done fantastic work on immigration files, and I thank them very much. They have not had to put up with me for 36 years but three of them have for more than 10 years, Hursh, Lisa, and Wendy. I thank them all.

I also know members will be equally well served by my successor. I really want to warmly congratulate the member for York South—Weston now that he has become Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. As members saw in question period today and yesterday, and in his first press conference over the weekend, my successor is a quick study. He is doing a great job. He has a warm heart. Immigration is in good hands.

As I look back over the last 16 years, I can think of some good times in this job and some not so good times, some pretty bad ones, actually. However, I thought what I would do is save my description of those bad times for my next speech in this chamber, which might be in some future life.

In terms of the good things, I only want to mention a couple: the nomination of Nelson Mandela to be an honorary citizen back in 2001 and, in particular, the Syrian refugees.

[Translation]

I am certainly glad that we have more than accomplished the task. In particular, I would like to thank the dedicated officials with the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

[English]

However, what makes me really proud is not that we got the job done, although that is good, but that at a time when so many

countries around the world are closing their doors to refugees, ordinary Canadians across this land have come out and have welcomed our newcomers with open hearts. That is what makes me very proud to be a Canadian.

• (1510)

[Translation]

Three days ago, the Prime Minister sent the following tweet:

To those fleeing persecution, terror and war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength.

[English]

I remember, very happily, that when we came up with this refugee initiative, all of the opposition parties supported us. I hope very much that in that same spirit all of the opposition parties would support the sentiments expressed in that tweet, especially about “irrespective of faith”. I believe very strongly that those sentiments reflect not just Liberal values but Canadian values.

I am going to China to work for broader and deeper ties between our two countries, with the ultimate objective of creating jobs and growth for middle-class Canadians. This is partly, but by no means exclusively, about free trade discussions. It being 2017, I know that a successful trading relationship must not only pass some economist test, but it must also be demonstrably job creating and prosperity creating for hard-working Canadians. It is in that spirit that I will be offering my advice on trade with China to the government.

[Translation]

Canada and China have enjoyed a strong friendship that began with Norman Bethune in the 1930s, and continued with John Diefenbaker and the export of wheat, and with Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the diplomatic recognition of China.

[Member spoke in Mandarin.]

[English]

As I said in Mandarin, Canadians and Chinese are good friends.

[English]

One of my projects is to improve my Mandarin.

However, when China and Canada have disagreed on something, and this sometimes happens, all three prime ministers I have served have drawn on this friendship to speak respectfully but frankly to their Chinese counterparts. I know this long tradition will continue.

One last thing about China. One of the jobs of any ambassador is to help vulnerable Canadians who have run into some of trouble in a foreign country, in this case, China, a little like the refugees. I commit to you, Mr. Speaker, that I will work as hard as I can to help those vulnerable Canadians in China. That will be a very important part of my job.

In conclusion, and I am not one of those who says “in conclusion” 17 times, not having anyone in mind who says that, I will miss this place and all the people in it, from my closest colleagues to my severest critics, who are usually not so severe, and quite nice most of the time.

Routine Proceedings

My final message to members collectively is to have the capacity to govern our country well and have the wisdom to make Canada even better in years to come.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as someone who grew up in Quebec City and who is proud of the Muslim community in his riding, I denounce ignorance and hate, which cut lives tragically short. I mourn for the victims, express my sympathy to their families and loved ones, wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured, and congratulate the police for arresting the alleged perpetrator of these senseless killings.

Since this is the last time that I will rise in the House after having had the honour of representing the magnificent communities of Saint-Laurent and Cartierville for 21 years, I would like to take the opportunity to make a last plea for the cause that I have served with all my might, that of a united, more prosperous, fairer, and greener Canada that plays its proper role in the world.

Our country is a world treasure. Canada is as big as a continent and awe-inspiringly beautiful. We enjoy among the highest quality of life of any country, with two international languages recognized as our official languages, a strong indigenous people who remind us of our history, and a multicultural population that allows us to influence the world. Our roots are in Europe, we form part of the Americas, and we are open to Asia. We have never deployed our brave troops abroad for any reason other than to courageously serve the causes of peace, democracy, and justice. For all of these reasons, billions of people see Canada as a universal ideal of openness, tolerance, and generosity, and we must always strive to live up to that image.

In order to be effective in our pursuit of that ideal, we need to draw on our linguistic duality, which was forged by our history and is essential to our future. The French language is also key to our future success.

My dear colleagues, let us do our part by choosing party leaders that can speak both official languages.

In order to be effective in our pursuit of the Canadian ideal, we need the full participation of Quebecers. We Quebecers worked alongside other Canadians to build this country from the ground up. Quebec's autonomy and a federalism that respects provincial jurisdiction are important, but we also need to share Quebec's know-how with the rest of Canada.

If anyone were to try to force us once more into the grave mistake of choosing between our two wonderful identities as Canadians and Quebecers instead of embracing them both, it would have to be with clarity, under the rule of law, under our constitutional framework, with a desire for justice for all. Those are the fundamental rights protected by the 1998 Supreme Court opinion and by the Clarity Act that gave it effect. However, I am convinced that, as Quebecers, we will always also choose to remain Canadians.

● (1520)

[*English*]

To come closer to this ideal that Canada represents in the world which I have just described in French, we need to build on our democracy's pluralism and our political parties' respective strengths. The Liberal Party, which I had the honour to once lead, strives to reconcile economic, social, and environmental challenges, rather than placing them in conflict. The Liberal Party believes that economic growth comes from more social justice, not less, and more effective environmental policies, not less. Canada must be at the forefront of this fight which is so vital for the future of humanity, finding the path of inclusive growth and sustainable development.

We need more Canada. We hear that all over the world. I am proud to have contributed my voice this past year to our country's role as a determined peace builder, defending our own interests and those of our allies, and promoting everywhere the universal value that all human beings, regardless of their nationality, are entitled to the same dignity.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

Those are the battles I have fought for my country as a parliamentarian for 21 years. I can never adequately thank those who gave me the opportunity to do so. If I had the time, I would name them all: prime ministers, colleagues, associates, constituents. However, let me just name my family, Janine and Jeanne, who have made enormous sacrifices and to whom I owe everything.

In recent weeks, I have had to choose between my two passions, teaching and public service. My thanks go to the Université de Montréal for offering me a visiting professorship under really outstanding conditions. I very nearly said yes, because, in my eyes, there is no finer calling than that of teacher. However, within these walls, I do not need to explain the addicting rush of adrenaline that comes from action, or to describe how irresistible is the call of public service, especially when that call comes from one's Prime Minister.

[*English*]

This is all the more so because of the large responsibility the Prime Minister has offered me. I am pleased to say, after the MP for Markham—Thornhill, that I have accepted the Prime Minister's offer to be Canada's senior diplomat to Europe. I have accepted the nomination as ambassador to both Germany and the European Union.

In its own way, the European continent is facing the same challenges as us with respect to ensuring that openness and inclusion triumphs over exclusion and xenophobia, to ensuring a path to inclusive growth, and to demonstrating that free trade be combined with the rights of workers and respect for the environment.

At this critical time, I will do my part to strengthen Canada's relationship with Europe. It will be an honour to join the Canadian diplomatic corps. During my 38 visits abroad last year, we were able to strengthen Canada's relationship with those countries. I owe that to the professionalism and excellence of our civil servants, diplomats, and heads of missions. I am looking ahead with enthusiasm to be serving by their side.

Routine Proceedings

There will be one thing that I miss: elected office. Mr. Speaker, through you to my dear colleagues, savour every minute that you hold the immense honour of being the elected representative of your riding. Each of you, in government and in opposition, show yourself worthy of the great responsibility you carry as a representative of the Canadian people. Cherish our democracy. Always work to improve it, and from time to time, rise above the adversity, and find the time, at least over a soccer game with the pages, to preserve the fraternity that unites us all.

I want members to remember that they will be welcome in Brussels or Berlin by one who may no longer be a colleague but will always be a friend.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Long live Canada's parliamentary democracy. Long live the friendship between Europe and Canada.

• (1545)

[English]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today it is my profound privilege to stand before this House and offer thanks to two of its esteemed members, both personally and on behalf of grateful Canadians.

The members representing Saint-Laurent and Markham—Thornhill have each given decades of service to Canada. There is no doubt that I, like all Canadians are, am stronger for it.

[Translation]

Thanks to their efforts, Canada is more united and has a greater appreciation for the diversity that is our strength. Today, we are more committed than ever to continue the work that they started and to build a Canada where every person has an equal chance to succeed, regardless of where they are born in Canada or elsewhere in the world.

I want to begin by saying a few words about the hon. member for Markham—Thornhill, one of the hardest-working people I know both inside and outside the political sphere. He devoted his career to serving Canadians, and first as a professor. As some of you may know, our paths first crossed when he was my dean at the Faculty of Arts at McGill University, and later when he was chief economist at the Royal Bank of Canada.

[English]

During my time at McGill, I was never quite overachieving enough to reach the dean's attention, but then I was never quite bad enough to either, and flying under the radar served both of our purposes very well.

It is in his record of public service that we see how deeply he cares about Canada and Canadians. Around the cabinet table, he has served as minister of national defence, minister of veterans affairs, and minister of national revenue, but most recently as minister of immigration, refugees and citizenship, he helped to fulfill one of the government's most important promises: to bring home nearly 40,000 new Canadians from Syria.

Mr. Speaker, you might think that after such a distinguished career, retirement would be next, but you would be wrong. The member will continue to serve our country as Canada's ambassador to China where his expertise and deep cultural ties will continue to strengthen and renew that important relationship.

I thank my friend for all that he has done and all he will continue to do in service to Canada and Canadians.

Thank you. *Merci. Xiè xie. Zhù ni chénggong.* My Chinese is worse than his.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: I would now like to address the hon. member for Saint-Laurent, who served his constituents and all Canadians for more than 20 years.

He wore many different hats throughout this lengthy career: minister of intergovernmental affairs, leader of the official opposition, minister of the environment, and, more recently, minister of foreign affairs. However, the man we have gotten to know on both sides of the House, a friend to many of you, is above all a great Canadian.

The hon. member for Saint-Laurent has always fought for a better Canada, a Canada that is greener, stronger, and more united. The hon. member presented his clear vision for a modern country with passion and integrity. He is known as a staunch defender of the Canadian project and, of course, as a proud Quebecker whose courage and ambition for his country and his constituents never wavered throughout his career.

His views and his policies were always rooted in his steadfast respect for our democratic principles and in the promise of a country where every Canadian has a chance to succeed.

• (1550)

[English]

In our time together, the member has been my leader and my friend, my minister, and now, now that John has told everyone, my ambassador to a continent that is one of our most important partners.

Thankfully for everyone here, cabinet confidentiality, and in my first years, leader-to-rookie MP confidentiality, does not let me tell all the stories of our time together. However, the times I have learned from him, often through a full dressing down, and not just when I was a rookie, the times we have disagreed, the times we have struggled through important times shoulder to shoulder, and mostly the times I have learned from his strength, his wisdom, his compassion, and his bedrock anchoring in Canadian values have enriched my life not only as a leader but as a person. I am a better person for having him as a friend and a mentor.

I know that he will take on his next challenge with the same courage and conviction that has defined his political life and that continues to inspire us all. I thank him for his continued service to this great country.

Routine Proceedings

The work of these two members has made Canada a better place. Working with them, getting to know them personally, and being able to call them my friends has been a great privilege in my life. I am grateful that I will be able to continue to rely on their wisdom, their advice, and their service.

I know I speak for everyone in this House when I say that these members will be missed.

[*Translation*]

We will miss their intellectual rigour and their senses of humour, and yes, even the backpack will be sadly missed. They will no longer be seated amongst us, but their leadership and hard work in service to our country will continue, and Canada will be better off for it.

On behalf of my party, the government, and all Canadians, thank you, my friends.

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me clarify for the member for Markham—Thornhill that I actually will not be giving his goodbye speech. It will be the member for Calgary Nose Hill, who is immigration critic, and I am sure he is very happy to hear that. She won the arm wrestle. She wants to say a few words one last time to her sparring partner for the last year.

However, I will say that when I one day leave this place and I want to make a big announcement about my future, I am not going to invite him to come to speak. This also leads me to say that I am just a little worried about our secrets about the government in China. We need to work on secret-keeping.

I will focus my comments on the member for Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to rise to pay tribute to our colleague, the member for Saint-Laurent.

A loyal member of the House of Commons for the past 20 years, the member for Saint-Laurent has proudly held almost every role in Parliament: MP, minister, party leader, leader of the opposition, and minister once more.

• (1555)

[*English*]

The member opposite has seen three prime ministers and more than a dozen party leaders come and go. He needs to write his memoirs.

He has seen the government change hands twice, and three different parties take the reins in opposition, and has spoken thousands of words in defence of his most deeply-held beliefs in this very room, sometimes with allies and sometimes with challengers. It is in his career that we find the rarest of political virtues, and that is patience.

It would be an understatement to say that I and my colleagues were not often in agreement with many of the positions the member for Saint-Laurent held throughout his career, but I know that I and my colleagues have never failed to be impressed by his steadfast commitment to his principles.

[*Translation*]

That is rare in Canadian politics. There are days when ordinary Canadians do not see everything we do here in the House, but they want and need passionate people to represent them, people who are ready to come to work every day, understand the issues in minute detail, and vigorously defend their positions. The member opposite epitomized all that and more.

[*English*]

I am proud to say that we have a bit in common. We have both held the dubious distinction of being leaders of the opposition in exciting times in our parties. We have both had the distinct honour of defending and strengthening Canada's precious natural beauty as ministers of the environment, though I know our approaches may have differed. I know he loves Kyoto so much that he named his dog after it, which is wonderful.

Most of all, I know that we both have the ability to shock and amaze our colleagues when the veneer of calm poise gives way to the occasional fiery question period performance.

[*Translation*]

His many years of dedicated service have earned the member for Saint-Laurent the respect of many people in his province, Quebec, and the respect of millions of Canadians across the country.

[*English*]

His career should be admired for its many accomplishments, but perhaps most admired of all will be his determined advocacy for our very unity as a country through a turbulent moment in our history, which helped to ensure that we remain a strong, enduring nation.

On behalf of our caucus, present and many who served with the member for many years past, we want to wish him all the best. I know the member likes to fish, so I hope he gets some time to do some fishing and spend more time with his family, and of course, we know that he will defend the Canada-EU trade agreement vigorously in his new role.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of the Conservative caucus, I wish him and his family all the best for this next stage in his career.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are times in this place, in the heat of the moment and in the pursuit of justice and progress, that we forget sometimes that we are indeed human beings. In the broader world of politics, this phenomenon is even more pervasive. As we seek to enter this place and to serve our communities, others often seek to define who we are and to define our proclivities and our intent.

Given this, and as our mythology grows for good or for ill, the question we often ask ourselves is this: What will my legacy be after my time in this place is finished? I would argue that the most fair measure of this would be the impact of our actions, and so to the member for Markham—Thornhill as he finishes his time in here today.

Routine Proceedings

Much like the Prime Minister, I actually encountered the member for Markham—Thornhill in my time in academia. I remember being an undergraduate economics student and reading a paper about home bias in the trade puzzle. It was actually written when I was 15 years old. I am just saying. Nonetheless, it was storied academic fact by the time I entered that portion of my life.

I have to say that in terms of action, for someone with the CV and the gravitas of the member for Markham—Thornhill to enter public service is a statement on the importance of what we do in this place. The fact that this place has attracted someone of his calibre also speaks to his actions.

I also think that when we leave this place, we need to reflect upon the weight of public service and the offices we carry, and the member for Markham—Thornhill has carried some significant offices: defence minister, veterans minister, and citizenship and immigration.

I do not think there is anyone in this place who would ever, having gone through this, have the right words to describe the loneliness we sometimes feel when we are carrying out an action that is not popular but is the right decision. To that, the member for Markham—Thornhill will be remembered for his actions as well.

In that journey, in that loneliness, when there is a day when one's name is all over the media and one just wants to curl into bed and put the covers over one's head and pretend nothing else has happened—the Prime Minister made a comment, and I would echo his sentiment, but it would be uncouth of me to repeat here—I do say this. In that lonely time, it is so important to have a partner, and in that we owe Nancy a debt of gratitude.

There is also compassion. We are measured by the compassion of our actions. While certainly the member and I have had our arguments around how and why and when and the mechanisms by which we welcome people into this country, I do not think there is anyone in this place who would argue the fact that Canada is a compassionate nation and that first and foremost, we seek to reflect our compassion in our immigration policy. In that, the member for Markham—Thornhill should be remembered for his actions.

As he mentioned, sometimes I am not a nice person. To the member's wit, I must confess that I did want to say this in the House of Commons at one point, so I am going to say it today. When he told me to smile more, my initial reaction was to ask him if he was smiling because his conversion efforts with Anakin Skywalker had been bearing fruit.

With that, I will close with something positive. The actions of a parliamentarian are often when iron sharpens iron, and some of the best experiences I have had in the House of Commons have been when someone whose ideology I do not necessarily agree with comes to the job with a position of seeking to better the country and then brings that passion and that philosophy to this place. That is when we do something that resembles work here, and that is something Canadians look forward to.

This is not a eulogy. The member has a great path ahead of him. He has a great weight of responsibility in his new role. Our relationship with China is one of the most important foreign national relationships we have. It is one of our greatest trading partners. It is

an economic powerhouse, so the member's new role will bear great responsibility.

• (1600)

In closing, I leave him with his own words:

I believe we should always seek to expand the rights of our fellow citizens as long as we do not thereby reduce the rights of others. We should seek to ensure that no group is denied full participation in society. As members of Parliament, we should not ask the question, why should we extend this right? Rather our question should be, why should we not extend the right? Let the burden of proof be on those who wish to limit fundamental rights.

I thank the member for Markham—Thornhill on behalf of the Conservative caucus and, indeed, all Canadians for his service here.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise on behalf of the NDP to bid farewell to two colleagues who, together, have served the Canadian people in the House for almost four decades: the hon. member for Saint-Laurent and the hon. member for Markham—Thornhill.

It is a privilege and an honour to be elected to this place, but it is also often a tumultuous path. They served through good political times and bad, which is something that many of us can relate to. They also served with so much dignity that they are models for every person in the House. It is with gratitude and respect that we return that honour to them today.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Saint-Laurent was made a minister by Jean Chrétien in 1996 after winning a byelection. He has won a seat in every federal election since then. He has held the positions of leader of the Liberal Party, minister of the environment, minister of intergovernmental affairs, and minister of foreign affairs. He has been a long-time advocate of electoral reform, which was one of his priorities, and he has extensively studied proportional representation, which, as members know, the NDP staunchly supports.

He is admired by everyone for his dedication, passion, and commitment to public service, and we are deeply grateful for his contribution to our country and to the House.

• (1605)

[*English*]

The hon. member for Markham—Thornhill was elected to this place in 2000. A brilliant economist, he has served as minister of national revenue, minister of immigration, refugees and citizenship, minister of national defence, and minister of veterans affairs. A real progressive, he was also, very early on, a strong advocate for same-sex marriage.

[*Translation*]

We seldom meet gentlemen like him. We will miss him very much.

[*English*]

It was he who successfully nominated Nelson Mandela as the second honorary citizen in Canadian history, and anyone who knows him will say that he is incredibly hard-working and seems to be everywhere one goes on the Hill. He is a member emeritus of the smokers' club at the back door, and that caucus has just lost one of its longest-standing members.

Routine Proceedings

His tenacity is widely appreciated and his fluent bilingualism and willingness to reach across party lines to work together are respected by all members of the House. He is a man of strong principle, who has always served the public first and foremost.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of the entire NDP caucus and all Canadians, I thank both of them for their dedication. They have left their mark on this place. We will miss them, but we wish them all the best in the future. I am convinced, knowing them as I do, that we will be hearing about them and we will follow with great interest their future endeavours.

On behalf of all of us, thank you again and we wish you all the best.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel has asked for the unanimous consent of the House to add his voice.

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agree.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the House for allowing me to say a few words as two members of the House depart. Although I would use the same words as others have to describe these two people, I will not repeat them. I will say that they are both individuals who have truly made their mark in Canada's history, particularly in Quebec's political landscape, in the case of the hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

I will always remember the conversations I had with the hon. member for Markham—Thornhill, especially when he was a member of the opposition, because he was my office neighbour at the Justice Building. When we walked down the hallway together, he told me about his experiences as an economics and finance professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal in French.

During the years he was teaching, that university was a bastion of sovereigntists. Imagine arriving as an English-speaking professor from another province. It was a bit funny, but he told me about what a great time he had teaching there and the great friendships he developed with the university students. This shows that he had the same strong character in teaching as he has in politics.

The member for Saint-Laurent was one of the giants of the Chrétien era. Those of us working for independence recall a time when we were bitter adversaries, a time when politicians did each other no favours. When he was a Royal Bank executive, our other colleague became involved in the 1995 referendum, thereby also becoming our adversary.

We recognize that they were worthy adversaries, with deep convictions, as well as good debaters. In that sense, we may say that they contributed to the cause of Quebec independence because they forced us, as supporters of independence, to refine our discourse and better develop our arguments. Therefore, thanks for giving us a hand there.

When our opponents force us to step up our game, we can only improve. As we agreed on so little at that time, I believe that we improved a lot.

However, since the distinguished member for Saint-Laurent mentioned the Clarity Act just now, I would like us to remember that the act was denounced unanimously in the National Assembly of Quebec and so, in combatting it, we represented the entire population of Quebec. It is funny, but I have to tell him that we would have preferred the Clarity Act to leave us before he did.

On a more serious note, I would also like to point out their genuine commitment to the public when they made the leap to active politics. Politics is an extreme sport. It takes dedication and conviction to survive in this kind of crazy universe for so long. Although our viewpoints were diametrically opposed on the Quebec nation's place in the world, we must acknowledge the important work of the two MPs who are leaving us, the work of the member for Saint-Laurent in the environment and the work of the other hon. member in immigration.

On behalf of my colleagues and myself, I wish them success in their future careers and the best of luck and friendships. I would also extend my regards to both families who have always supported them.

● (1610)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to add a few words. The members for Markham—Thornhill and for Saint-Laurent have been my friends for a long time now. It is funny to think back and realize that our relationship started because of the Sydney tar ponds on Cape Breton Island.

[*English*]

It started off that I got to know the member for Markham—Thornhill in 2001, which was when we first started having a real friendship, and it was because I was not in politics. I was the executive director of the Sierra Club, and I was on a hunger strike right in front of this building.

New members will not know that before 9/11, we could be right in front of the members' door, and I had permission to sit there and be on a hunger strike. That lasted 17 days. By the way, if I had known when I started that it would take 17 days for Allan Rock to crack, I would not have done that.

The member for Markham—Thornhill spent a lot of time chatting with me, and this was not because he was interested in the Sydney tar ponds. It was because it was a great place for a smoke break, and that is how we got to know each other.

He used to sit right over here, as he was just remembering. The current Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard used to call this the smoking section, the little group we had over here. However, over all the years, I was never so glad to have laid a foundation of friendship with this wonderful man. I loved sitting with him when the Liberal caucus was over here. As the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill quite rightly pointed out, he has an immense knowledge, an immense background, a stunning academic CV. I could run over and check economics; it was very handy.

Government Orders

However, he became minister of immigration and did the magnificent job on behalf of the Prime Minister and the commitment of Canadians to open our arms to Syrian refugees. He will know that I had many specific families, and I went to him over and over again begging, and he always listened and took action. I am so deeply grateful, as are nearly 40,000 families who live in Canada now because of his enormous effort.

I worried about his health then. I thought he was working himself down to nothing, and I know his wonderful wife Nancy shared some concerns, but now I think he will just have an easy time. I think his workload will be enormous, but there is one thing that will not happen in China: he will not be allowed a place as a smoker any more, so perhaps we can wish him good luck and that he still try to give up the smoking, and take care of Canada's interests.

• (1615)

[Translation]

I will now say a few words about my friend and hero the minister who was the MP for Saint-Laurent and who is now saying goodbye in the House. For me, he is a hero because of the work he did as minister of the environment in 2005.

[English]

That was the last good conference of the parties of all those that led right up to Paris, and it was not easy. It was 24-hour, round-the-clock work. People do not understand what it is like to take that stress, and as minister of the environment in 2005, the current member for Saint-Laurent worked tirelessly to get Kyoto confirmed, and against the objections of the Bush administration. It was not easy. I do not say this just out of friendship. I do not just have admiration for people across party lines without it being deeply deserved.

From there he went on to be leader of the Liberal Party, a colleague again.

It is one of the greatest honours I have ever had knowing both the member for Markham—Thornhill and the member for Saint-Laurent as friends, having the enormous honour to be the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and being able to work with them, alongside them, both in opposition and now across the aisle.

I am so glad, so grateful, that the member for Saint-Laurent has accepted the Prime Minister's offer. With COP 23 being hosted by Fiji, and Fiji not having capacity to welcome the world to negotiate, the negotiations will be in Bonn. I do hope the member, our ambassador for Germany and the European Union, will find a way to participate and help along those negotiations at COP 23, so I do not have to say *au revoir*, but only *à la prochaine*.

[Translation]

My heartfelt thanks to the two hon. members for all their hard work and remarkable talents.

The Speaker: It is always nice to see MPs kissing here in the House. I would like to echo the sentiments that have already been expressed by my colleagues.

Both of them have been my long-time colleagues.

[English]

I have admired them for their intelligence, their dedication, and their devotion to Canada and to their work. I have also appreciated their friendship over many years, and I want to wish them the very best in their new endeavours in the diplomatic community.

[Translation]

Thank you very much and good luck.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1620)

[English]

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to talk about important legislation that the government brought forward late last fall. To a certain degree, there was an expectation from some members, and hope from others, that members would recognize the value of trying to expedite the legislation. However, although I was one of those who hoped we could get the bill passed as early as late December, I appreciate the need of members to contribute to the discussions and debates at all times.

The Minister of Health said it best when she talked about how as a nation we recognized that the opioid crisis was just that, a very serious crisis that needed to be addressed. This government views this as an issue of the utmost importance. Day in and day out, we have seen a very proactive Minister of Health try to ensure that what can be done will be done.

A number of things have been noted. I appreciated it when one of the New Democrat speakers, and I am unsure but I believe it was possibly the critic for health, made reference to a number of things the government had done. It is important to recognize that a series of things have been done to date, and it is understandable as to why that has happened.

In 2015, it was estimated that as many as 2,000-plus people had succumbed to death as a direct result of accidental overdoses. It is a serious crisis. People are dying virtually every day. If we want to average that out, we are talking about more than one or two people dying every day in this most tragic way. We see young and old alike dying as a direct result of an overdose from opioids, fentanyl in particular.

There are a couple of things I would like to emphasize.

Government Orders

We have talked a lot about these supervised safe sites. The legislation would go a long way to ensure that where it is clearly demonstrated that there is a need, that need will be met somehow. I want to spend a bit of time on this because I know a number of people from the Conservative Party in particular are somewhat critical of why we want to allow for more supervised injection sites.

In certain areas of the community I represent, people can walk on some of those streets and see used needles and all sorts of instruments that have been used for drugs, and who knows what else. There are serious issues. However, it is not just in one area of the country. It is throughout many of our communities. It is not just in the hard-luck areas where we find poverty. We will find it in inner cities and the suburbs. The last time I had the opportunity to speak on this issue, three individuals from the Meadows West area of the constituency I represent had overdosed. This issue crosses many different socio-economic barriers. Therefore, we have a responsibility.

In the questions I put forward, I often make reference to the fact that what we want from the national government, and what the national government has indeed provided, is leadership on the file. The minister and the government recognize that Ottawa alone cannot resolve the problem. To have the desired impact that Canadians want, we must work with the many different stakeholders to make a difference, and we saw that.

● (1625)

The Standing Committee on Health had the opportunity to study the issue and came up with numerous recommendations. Many of those recommendations can only be effective if multi-level governments and stakeholders come to the table and play a significant role to fight this crisis.

One of the things we have been very successful with, in a relatively short time period, is bringing those stakeholders together, recognizing what needs to get done to have the desired impact that is so very important in taking on this crisis.

In terms of the opioid crisis and saving lives, a policy is necessary to protect Canadians. We need to deal with the causes. We need to recognize that this is a health issue in so many ways. It causes so much harm to our society, not only to individuals who are addicted to these drugs but to their family and friends, and the heart of the community itself.

I understand and appreciate that what we do collectively is very important.

I have had the opportunity to ask a number of questions today on the legislation. I do believe that there is always room to improve. The Prime Minister has always challenged members of the House, of all political stripes, to bring ideas to the committee if they believe they will make a difference and if they have done the background work to demonstrate it through science or facts.

We have seen amendments made at the committee level. We are open to ideas that would make a difference if they can be incorporated. I would encourage members from all political entities to share their thoughts with the Department of Health, particularly when the bill goes to committee.

In having discussions, I am pleased the New Democratic Party has taken a fairly proactive approach to the legislation. It has recognized and been constructive in its critique. It recognizes the benefits of passing the legislation sooner as opposed to later.

It was not an easy feat to ultimately get the legislation ready based on the amount of consultation that had to take place in a relatively short time span, but we were able to bring it forward last December. I will give the New Democrats credit for recognizing the benefits of seeing if there is a way to expedite the passage of the legislation.

I request that all members give serious consideration to what we can do to, at the very least, to move the bill out of second reading to committee. The health committee could then deal with the legislation, and members could provide input there, as well as at third reading.

I have heard a number of members from the B.C. region and others talk about where this impacts Canada. It impacts every region of Canada. It is not isolated in one, or two, or three provinces. All provinces are finding it challenging. They want to see action coming from Ottawa. This is just one aspect, a very important aspect, in the fight against this national crisis.

I would like to highlight a couple of things the bill proposed to do, and they have been pointed out in some of the debates thus far. In essence, it will simplify the process of applying for an exemption that will allow certain activities to take place at supervised consumption sites, as well the process of applying for subsequent exemptions.

● (1630)

The bill proposes to prohibit the importation of designated devices unless the importation is registered with the Minister of Health, as well as prescribed activities in relation to designated devices. It authorizes the minister to temporarily add to a schedule of the act substances that the minister has reasonable grounds to believe pose a significant risk to public health or safety, in order to control them. Additionally, it authorizes the minister to require a person who may conduct activities in relation to controlled substances, precursors, or designated devices to provide the minister with information or to take certain measures in respect of such activities. It adds an administrative monetary penalties scheme, which is long overdue.

We are looking at streamlining the disposition of seized, found, or otherwise acquired controlled substances, precursors, and chemical and non-chemical offence-related property. We are looking at modernizing the inspection powers and expanding and amending certain regulation-making authorities to include “in respect of the collection, use, retention, disclosure and disposal of information”.

I understand my time has expired, but there might be a question so I can continue.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to some of the things my colleague has said throughout the afternoon. I wonder if the member has actually gone to one of these injection sets and knows what it is all about.

Government Orders

According to my colleague, Senator Vern White, the average addict commits four to eight crimes in order to get the money to pay for his or her illegal heroin. It is usually an illegal opioid. It could be laced with anything. It could be kerosene, for heaven's sake. The addicts go into one of these injection sites, self-inject and then they are sent back out into the community to do it over and over again.

The minister has repeatedly said that these injection sites save lives, but I think everyone agrees that treatment centres save lives. The minister is renegotiating the health accord. She said she is willing to use levers. Why has the minister not encouraged the provinces to invest in detox treatment programs instead of only pushing the harm reduction measures in communities?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I disagree with what the member has tried to imply. The supervised injection sites do in fact save lives. Canada does not have very many of these sites. We have Insite and another one in the Vancouver area. There have been many other applications, but the former Conservative government went out of its way to discourage these supervised injection sites. That is to the detriment of the safety of our communities and causes a great deal of harm not only to the individuals who are addicted but to family members and the community as a whole.

By providing that environment, we are in fact allowing for the community to be healthier. If I had more time, I would like to expand on that.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, when the health committee conducted our emergency study into the opioid crisis last fall, the very first recommendation we made, with all-party support, was to declare the opioid overdose crisis a national public health emergency. This would give the public health officer of Canada extraordinary powers to act immediately, primarily by flowing emergency funds where they needed it and by declaring overdose prevention units as health units to legalize them so cities could actually get supervised consumption sites operating immediately instead of waiting for the application process under the bill, which the hon. member knows will take months before it is passed.

This call was echoed by Dr. David Juurlink, the keynote speaker at the health minister's opioid summit, by B.C. health minister, Terry Lake, and mayors across the country.

In the face of the mounting death toll and his acknowledgement that supervised consumption sites save lives, why will the government not declare a national public health emergency so we can actually get these temporary emergency sites operating today and start saving lives today?

•(1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that we have responded to every request the provinces have raised with our government in this crisis and we continue to work with them. In fact, in the event that a public welfare emergency under the Emergencies Act were declared, the chief public health officer would not have any new or special powers. The Emergencies Act is considered a tool of last resort and an emergency has never been declared under this act. Prior to its enactment, its predecessor, the War Measures Act, was used only three times: during the First World War, the Second World War, and the October crisis of 1970.

What is important for us to recognize is that this government has demonstrated strong national leadership in working with our provincial counterparts, indigenous people, municipalities, the many different stakeholders that have a vested interest, our first responders, and so many more, bringing people together in order to have a coordinated comprehensive approach to deal with this national crisis.

This government is doing whatever can be done in order to get the job done.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Today I rise in the House to address a grave situation. Bill C-37, which was introduced by the Minister of Health, is supposedly a solution to combat the ongoing opioid crisis in Canada. However, if carried through, the bill would have the potential to devastate communities, while creating no real solution for addicts.

I have no issues with certain parts of the bill. It must be acknowledged that certain sections are steps in the right direction.

It is appropriate that the bill would grant more authority to the Canada Border Services Agency in order for it to open international mail of any weight. We know that imports from certain countries are a major contributor to Canada's growing opioid problem. As it stands, the Canada Border Services Agency is not permitted to open, search, or test suspicious packages that weigh less than 30 grams. As a result, drug dealers in Canada have been able to order chemicals and illicit drugs online and have them shipped here.

It is vital that the government continue to ensure that these deadly chemicals are not crossing our borders and that those importing them are punished and held accountable.

I support the bill's prohibition of importing unregistered devices, such as pill pressers, which are used to manufacture bootleg fentanyl.

Broadening prohibitions so they apply to the possession, production, sale, importation, or transportation of anything intended to be used in the production of any controlled substance, including fentanyl, is welcome. However, the penalties, especially for the schedule I substances, are far too soft.

I also support the section of the bill that would allow the addition of a temporary schedule to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, because often new substances are designed to mimic illegal drugs while being different enough to avoid existing laws.

Government Orders

For the most part, these are steps in the right direction. However, there exist dangerous flaws in the rest of Bill C-37, which I cannot in good conscience support as is.

It is immensely disappointing that the Liberals refuse to acknowledge that prescription opioids are a major contributor to the opioid crisis.

In 2014, the previous Conservative government announced a plan to pursue tamper-resistant properties in prescription drugs. This would make it tough for people to crush, inject, or snort the pill. The Liberals have decided to abandon this plan, claiming it would not help Canada's growing drug problem. This decision is ill-informed and irresponsible. We encourage the Liberals to reintroduce tamper-resistant properties in order to save the lives of Canadians.

I am especially disturbed by the portion of the bill that severely weakens the Respect for Communities Act, which is crucial to ensuring that communities are consulted before a supervised injection site is approved.

Bill C-37 would make the consultative process surrounding injection sites practically non-existent. It would prevent communities from voicing legitimate concerns regarding proposed injection sites. Ironically, the government promised to engage and listen to the concerns of Canadians. It is essential that all members of communities have the opportunity to give input on proposed injection sites. This must include police, neighbourhood groups, public health organizations, the province, and the municipal government.

● (1640)

It ought to be mandatory to acquire a letter of support from the mayor of the city in which an injection site is to be located. It is not acceptable that if this ill-advised bill is enacted, a supervised injection site may be approved after meeting only five criteria as opposed to 26 previous safeguards.

Last year I held a public round table on these so-called safe injection sites in my riding of Markham—Unionville. Over 100 residents attended. They all told me they fear these injection sites are normalizing illegal behaviour and creating an unsafe environment for children. They are worried these sites will decrease their property values. Furthermore, they are furious that the Liberal government is wasting taxpayer dollars on purchasing drugs and paraphernalia for addicts.

I also wrote a letter to each Markham councillor asking whether they would support a safe injection site in Markham. Any response other than a definitive no is unsatisfactory for me and all residents of Markham—Unionville. I have yet to receive such a reply.

Markham council will have the final say on whether or not a safe injection site is located in Markham. I am extremely concerned that if presented with a proposal to open a safe injection site in Markham, council will approve this request. Markham residents can expect to hear more from me on this issue. I will not stop until I am satisfied that there will be no safe injection site in Markham.

This bill proves that the Liberals would rather encourage drug users than help them get back on their feet through rehabilitation and treatment.

Drugs that are used in supervised injection sites are illegally obtained. The Liberal government's actions would enable criminal behaviour and give addicts a safe space to get their fix instead of investing in proper treatment. Substance abuse experts, medical experts, and law enforcement officials all agree that the best way to spend money is on effective treatment programs, not injection sites.

The Liberals have given up on people who need help. Instead of allocating money to programs that can treat addicts, the Liberals are attempting to push ahead with a plan that would jeopardize the safety of communities. We ask ourselves, why would the Liberals do this? The answer, it seems, is that they are pursuing a shocking hidden agenda.

I was alarmed last Thursday when I read a Liberal MP's bombshell opinion editorial for *Vice News Canada* with the headline "Decriminalize all drugs". This is a dangerous and irresponsible proposal.

Only a couple of weeks ago, a drug lab was discovered in the heart of a residential neighbourhood in Markham—Unionville, forcing residents to evacuate.

For concerned families and communities like ours, these reckless Liberal ideas are reprehensible and also highlight the minister's out-of-touch ideas about drug policies. Helping rehabilitate drug addicts is a noble policy, but handing out drug paraphernalia and decriminalizing the most dangerous illicit narcotics are not.

While I support certain sections of the bill that would make it more difficult to import drugs and chemicals from overseas, I strongly condemn the parts of the bill regarding injection sites that encourage drug use instead of helping drug users quit and get back on their feet.

I urge members of the House to stand up for their communities and for all Canadians and reject this disturbing and careless bill until it protects Canadians instead of jeopardizing communities and to reject the Liberals' hidden drug agenda.

● (1645)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the speech by the member for Markham—Unionville. I am wondering if the member could explain to us how he expects to put drug users back on their feet by putting them in jail and giving them a criminal record. Maybe we should think about treating this as a medical issue. Maybe using controlled injection sites as a medical environment to encourage safe use and get people away from drugs might be better.

Does my colleague find it important to act on the opioid crisis or does he think the status quo works? It is really important. I would like to hear the member's support for real action going forward quickly.

Government Orders

On December 12, the member for Vancouver Kingsway asked for consent to have this legislation advance at all stages and I think that would be a good avenue for us to follow.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, treatment is the way to go. As I said, at the round table in Markham—Unionville, over 100 people came, and 95% said no to an injection site. If the member is asking to go to injection sites, I know that people would rather have treatment than injection sites to have illegal drugs injected. This is what the people said in Markham—Unionville. Injection sites are not the solution.

Treat them. Give them a chance to recover for long-term health results. Jail the drug traffickers who are making illegal money for the long term so that kids can live safely in their neighbourhoods. It would stop the drug flow from other nations.

Prescription opioids is a bigger issue. There are many who have died from them.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging the work the hon. member has done with respect to this issue. He has held several round tables in his riding with the opposition critic for health.

One of the proposals in the bill, and the member spoke briefly on this issue, is a consultation period, with various communities, of up to 90 days, which effectively means that within one day, a decision can be made on whether a safe injection site comes to a community or not.

I wonder if the member could share with the House some of what he heard at some of those round tables and the concerns of his residents, which I expect would be concerns for a lot of residents across this country.

• (1650)

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, the previous Conservative government brought in the Safe Streets and Communities Act. There are 26 restrictions. They are restricted to certain areas. They have to talk to the neighbourhoods and talk to the police. That is what people said to me at my round table discussions. They were extremely happy that this was put in by the Conservative government. However, in Bill C-37, that is all gone. As the member said, it can be done in five hours. Instead of 26 restrictions, there are only five restrictions left.

What I heard at my round tables was about the Liberals' hidden agenda on legalizing drugs. They are dangerous, deadly, addictive drugs. We know that street drugs tear families apart as well as users' own lives.

The Liberal member for Beaches—East York made the argument a couple of days ago that the criminal aspect of drug use stigmatizes users and makes them less likely to seek help. The problem is that there is no proper help to offer addicts seeking it across the country. We are hearing that when a drug addict finally decides to take the steps to seek treatment, there are no beds available for them.

In this opioid crisis, it is irresponsible for any member of Parliament to be advocating the legalization of all life-ruining drugs.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is a really important issue for me, because I represent a

riding in Calgary. Calgary has been basically one of the epicentres of this particular crisis in Canada. While we are seeing the impact of this crisis to a large extent in British Columbia and Alberta, it is really important to note that this is a problem that is going to affect every area of Canada in a very short period of time.

I cannot express strongly enough how concerned I am. “Concerned” does not actually carry the weight I want it to carry. I will say how deathly afraid I am that if we do not act quickly and in a very non-partisan way to manage this particular crisis and some of the key factors that are enabling this to explode, we are going to have a much larger and deadlier crisis on our hands and a lot of parents with dead kids who we will have to explain our actions to.

I want to speak to the bill and its structure from a point of gravitas and ask my colleagues on the opposite side of the House to consider some portions of the bill in that spirit.

We are here today, first and foremost, to do what we can to stop the flow of this particular substance, fentanyl, into Canada and to ensure that adequate laws are in place to stem the tide as much as we can. That is first and foremost.

I know that there has been a lot of talk today about why certain measures in this bill are so important. I agree with certain components of it. The component that would allow the Canada Border Services Agency to open packages that are under 30 grams is absolutely critical, because we know that the substance is highly potent. It is coming in from Chinese factories, for lack of a better term, or manufacturers, and because it is so potent, these manufacturers overseas are able to say not to worry about it, because Canada Border Services cannot open these packages. It is coming in inside things like cellphone cases, urine strip bottles, tiny packages. Because it is so potent, it can then be cut or mixed in larger centres and distributed. It is very lucrative, very easy, and so deadly.

I cannot tell the House some of the stories I have heard in my constituency office. In six years, I have seen a lot with the Calgary Police Service. The city has gone through a lot, but this is something that has first responders very unsettled. First responders in my city who have to deal with these deaths are really shaken up by this and are screaming out to us, telling us that we have to change some of these things.

There are measures in this bill that I strongly support. We need to pass them in the House and in the other place as soon as possible and without delay. Those measures would be things like the power to open packages under 30 grams, the prohibition of unregistered pill presses, and the illegal importation of precursors to the substance.

Government Orders

There are a variety of other initiatives in the bill, which include authorizing a minister “to require a person who may conduct activities in relation to controlled substances, precursors or designated devices to provide the Minister with information or to take certain measures in respect of such activities”; adding an administrative monetary penalties scheme; streamlining “the disposition of seized, found or otherwise acquired controlled substances”; modernizing inspection powers; and expanding and amending certain regulation-making authorities, including in respect of the collection, use, and disclosure of information.

All of these things are going to send a very strong message to the people making this, and it is going to stop a lot of it from coming in. These measures are a first line of defence. There is a broader problem to deal with, but this is low-hanging fruit that I do not think anyone in this place is going to argue with.

On that note, I will quote one of my Liberal colleagues from Vancouver, the member for Vancouver Centre. She stated, “I feel it’s something we need to be doing something about faster than we are doing it”.

• (1655)

There are components in the bill that are strong, smart, and should be supported. However, there is another component in the bill that requires a lot more debate and that I do not think should be fast-tracked through the House.

My objection to the bill is its structure. There are elements that I think require unanimous consent. They just need to be passed through as quickly as possible. However, there are some components that require further debate and that many Canadians would be unhappy about should we just let them go through. They are, frankly, the consultation process and the requirement for review criteria for the opening of safe consumption sites.

I know that this is a very controversial debate. As to how long and under what circumstances a community should be consulted in terms of allowing a safe consumption site, we had a very rigorous debate about this in the last Parliament. It took a lot of time. We heard from a lot of witnesses at committee. That debate should happen again. However, I do not want to be sitting here looking at the mother of a dead kid saying that we are holding the bill up because we have a debate component here.

The government has made a mistake in pairing these two issues. I do not understand why they are put together in the same piece of legislation. I could speculate on motive, but I do not want to, because it does a disservice to the gravity of the situation or some of the other measures that just need to pass as quickly as possible.

This component needs more debate. I do not want to get into the form or substance or reason for that, because it could take hours, but the reality is that there are 25 different criteria currently for the consultation process, very specific criteria, for opening a safe consumption site. In this bill, they are reduced to five. These criteria are as follows:

- a) the impact of the site on crime rates;
- (b) the local conditions indicating a need for the site;
- (c) the regulatory structure in place to support the site;
- (d) the resources available to support the maintenance of the site; and

(e) expressions of community support or opposition.

Regardless of one's personal opinion on safe injection sites and whether or not they are beneficial, my issue is that the bill does not adequately define these characteristics or these criteria. They are very vague. In this debate, we need to have community buy-in and social licence. Reducing these criteria from something that is so specific to something that is so vague and not defined is worthy of a larger and longer debate, regardless of what our position is. We should be bringing in witnesses and taking the time at committee to define these things, but this is time we do not have, especially for the Border Services Agency having the power to open packages of less than 30 grams. Let us just get that done.

My objection to this is simply that I do not understand why these have been paired together. If we want to make the argument about safe consumption sites being part of the overall fentanyl crisis, fine, but those two things can be done in separate bills so that at least we can get a stopgap measure on some of these things. That is what really struck me first and foremost. That was my first concern when I looked through the bill.

To drive home the point about how critical it is for us to get some of these measures through the House as quickly as possible, I want to give members some statistics from Calgary. This happened on December 29, 2016. There was a bust in Calgary, and it was a record. There were 35,321 pills in a home in Calgary. That is a lot of deaths waiting to happen. When I read this, my first reaction was, “Oh my God, how is this possible? How can this happen? What can I do as a legislator to stop the production of this so that this is not happening?”

We should not be relying on our first responders to find this before it goes out into the marketplace. We should be doing everything possible to make it difficult for this stuff to be created in the first place.

• (1700)

When we think about the potency and potential street impact of that number of pills, it should actually humble and just shock every person in this place. What does this mean? What is the human component of that? It is 193 deaths in my province between January and September of last year.

I implore the government to look at the two components of this bill and structure it better so that we can stop kids from dying.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just have a question. Does the hon. member agree with the Supreme Court of Canada's 2011 ruling on Insite? In that ruling, the Supreme Court laid out five criteria for safe injection sites. I would like her comments on that, and specifically whether she agrees with the Supreme Court.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, in the last Parliament we had dozens of witnesses who came before committee who verified the need and the desire to have a more robust and clearly defined consultation process.

Government Orders

I reject the notion that the Supreme Court of Canada defines everything we do in this place. It is our responsibility as legislators to come up with the best possible legislation, and I still argue that the health minister has not defined these criteria in here. Just because the Supreme Court says something does not mean that we have to abdicate our responsibility to come up with legislation that makes sense and is clear.

Again, my colleague here is missing the point. He is missing the entire point of my debate. This is a debate that requires more time. The whole consultation process around safe injection sites, social licence, whether it is effective, and all of those types of questions is a matter for committee study and for extreme examination. There are other elements in this bill that just need to happen right now. I do not understand why the government has paired these two together.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for helping us to get to know her riding, albeit as the result of unfortunate events, the loss of human lives.

I would also like to talk about my province, Quebec. I would specifically like to talk about the current situation in Montreal. On average, 70 people in that city die of drug overdoses every year. According to a report published in 2013 by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec, from 2005 to 2009, the number of fatal overdoses caused by medical opioids increased by 70% in the province.

I would like to know my colleague's opinion. Does she agree that Canada should revise its guidelines on prescribing and using opioids?

• (1705)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, I believe that there actually was a UN report that was published some time ago that shows that Canada is actually the highest user of opioids, be they prescription or street drugs, in the world. Certainly I agree, and I want to re-emphasize and not diminish the fact that this is probably one of the biggest crises facing Canada's health right now, and it is mushrooming.

We need to have a very comprehensive and robust debate about how we best address those issues: everything from some of the components in the bill here that talk about stopping the production and access to these drugs, to the best methodology for treatment, to the fact that treatment is not a one-size-fits-all issue. My colleague from South Surrey—White Rock made a very good case earlier today, talking about how we need to have treatment methods for people who are using it as part of an entrenched street issue, injecting it; for people who are using it recreationally and do not know what they are doing; and for people who are abusing prescriptions. If we talk to medical professionals, we will hear them say that different strategies are needed for different users. On top of all of that, we need to be talking about how we block access and prevent the production of these.

Certainly I would agree with my colleague, and there is more debate to be had. There is action that we need to take right now, for

which our first responders and our law enforcement officials are crying out. What I do not want to see is those components being delayed because there are other components that require a more fulsome debate.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton East.

The emergence of fentanyl and its analogues, an opioid at least 100 times more potent than morphine, has given rise to a public health crisis in Canada that requires urgent action.

Bill C-37 proposes to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act in a number of ways to address this crisis. In terms of harm reduction, it proposes to simplify the process of applying both for a supervised consumption site and for the exemptions that would allow certain activities to take place at a supervised site. I am pleased to see an evidence-based health-centric focus on harm reduction return to our health policy and legislation.

With regard to law enforcement and border security, amongst many changes, it would prohibit the importation of designated devices, unless they are registered with the Minister of Health. This would specifically prohibit unregistered importation of pill presses and encapsulators. It would expand the offence of possession, production, sale, or importation of anything with the knowledge that it will be used to produce or traffic in methamphetamines.

The bill would authorize the minister to temporarily add to a schedule substances that the minister has reasonable grounds to believe pose a significant risk to public health and safety. It would modernize inspection powers allowing border officers to open mail weighing 30 grams or less in order to stop drugs like fentanyl from entering Canada illegally through the mail system.

I would like to add my support for this bill and the proposed amendments to the CDSA. I would frame my support with particular reference to the recommendations from the December 2016 report by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, entitled "Report and Recommendations on the Opioid Crisis in Canada". I am pleased to be a member of the standing committee.

My following remarks draw heavily on this report and the excellent summation of the witnesses' testimony and the committee's deliberations, as provided by the committee's members and supporting staff. The members of the standing committee agreed to undertake an emergency study of the opioid crisis in Canada. During the course of its study, the committee held five meetings, where it heard from a range of stakeholders, including federal and provincial government representatives, health care professionals, addiction experts, emergency front-line responders, representatives of first nations communities, and individuals with lived experience in substance abuse and addiction.

These witnesses outlined specific ways to address the opioid crisis and implored the committee to make recommendations that would lead to concrete action. I cannot emphasize enough the powerful, emotional, and compelling testimony that we heard from all witnesses urging the government to take action on this crisis.

The committee heard from witnesses that this situation began reaching crisis proportions in July 2013, when fentanyl, a prescription opioid 100 times more potent than morphine, became increasingly available on the illicit drug market. The assistant commissioner for federal policing special services with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police advised the committee that, because of the high demand for this drug, organized crime groups began importing illegal fentanyl from China. These are then transformed into tablet forms in clandestine labs in Canada using pill presses and are disguised as legal prescriptions, such as OxyContin, or are used in powder form as cutting agents for other illicit drugs.

The unknown potency of illegal fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, coupled with the fact that users are often unaware that they are taking the drug, has resulted in a dramatic increase in drug deaths in Canada. British Columbia has become the epicentre of the crisis because of its maritime ports and relative proximity to China.

According to the chief coroner for British Columbia, the percentage of drug deaths involving fentanyl increased from 5% in 2012 to 60% in 2016, with the involvement of fentanyl doubling the rates of drug deaths in the province. According to the coroner, the province had experienced—and this at the date of the testimony—488 illicit drug deaths at the end of August 2016, or approximately 61 deaths a month.

In addition—and again, I am drawing from the text of the my committee's report—the committee heard that the RCMP is collaborating with law enforcement agencies in China to combat international drug trafficking networks, as well as to gain support for regulatory control of fentanyl analogues to prevent their distribution in Canada.

In terms of federal efforts at the border, the committee heard that Canada Border Services Agency is using innovative technologies and dogs to detect fentanyl at borders and maritime ports, resulting in more than 115 seizures since 2010.

• (1710)

However, the vice-president of the operations branch of the CBSA explained to the committee that the agency faces challenges detecting and intercepting fentanyl sent through the postal system. Fentanyl powder and equivalent substances are most often smuggled into Canada through the postal stream. Due to the increased volume of packages sent through postal and courier services, it can be a challenge for the CBSA to identify and intercept all shipments of concern. Postal and courier shipments are often accompanied by false declarations or are intentionally mislabelled. The RCMP further elaborated that these shipments are disguised or labelled in a variety of ways, such as printer ink, toys, and DVDs. To address this issue, Canada Border Services was reviewing the Customs Act to see if it could remove the restrictions on the agency's ability to open packages weighing less than 30 grams.

Government Orders

With respect to harm reduction strategies, the committee heard that supervised consumption sites are an evidence-based harm reduction measure. A number of witnesses expressed the opinion that changes to the CDSA, introduced in 2015, through Bill C-2, were a barrier to establishing new supervised consumption sites across the country and should be repealed or significantly amended.

After much deliberation, the committee made a number of recommendations.

Specific to harm reduction measures is recommendation number eight: “That the Government of Canada repeal or significantly amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act where it creates barriers to communities in establishing supervised consumption sites...”. Bill C-37 addresses this recommendation specifically.

Specific to law enforcement and border security, the committee made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 33 says:

That the Government of Canada take measures to grant authority and lawful privilege to Canada Border Services Agency officials to search and/or test suspect packages that weigh under 30 grams.

Recommendation 34 says:

That the Government of Canada develop a federal enforcement and interdiction strategy around the importation of illicit opioids.

Recommendation 35 says:

That the Government of Canada adopt measures to regulate commercial pill presses to limit their possession to pharmacists and others who hold an appropriate licence.

Recommendation 36 says:

That stronger criminal penalties for having a production machine be established.

Finally, recommendation 37 says:

That the Government of Canada provide more resources for drug testing packages and other shipments.

I am pleased to see that Bill C-37 addresses these recommendations and is consistent with the cited findings of the committee.

Looking beyond Bill C-37 and the amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the committee heard that this crisis should be considered a public health crisis, and the committee produced many other recommendations related to harm reduction, addictions prevention including prescribing practices and public education, addictions treatment, the need for mental health supports, and issues unique to first nations.

The Minister of Health has already responded to this crisis through a five-point action plan that includes better informing Canadians about the risks of opioids, supporting better prescribing practices, reducing easy access to unnecessary opioids, supporting better treatment options for patients, improving the evidence base and improving data collection, and also by making naloxone available as an emergency treatment.

Progressive action was also initiated by the minister through a pan-Canadian opioid summit held in November 2016.

Further, the minister has responded to every request that the provinces have raised with the government, and she continues to work with the provinces.

Government Orders

Finally, while this public health crisis must be addressed through the measures proposed in Bill C-37, and while as Canadians we battle the addictions brought on by opioid usage, it is important to remember that some Canadians, like Christina in my riding of Oakville, suffer from unrelenting and incurable pain. My thoughts are with her today. We must always ensure that their needs are addressed and that appropriate pharmaceutical care remains available to them.

I want the residents of my riding of Oakville to be protected from the opioid crisis and illicit fentanyl distribution. I will be supporting Bill C-37, and I encourage all members of the House to support this bill and to work to address this terrible public health crisis. Let us get this bill through the House and the other place as quickly as we can to help these Canadians.

•(1715)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I serve together on the health committee. I would like to thank him for a lot of the good work that has been done.

As my colleague from Calgary said, we are all in agreement with much of what Bill C-37 contains, but one of the things we are not in agreement with is the Liberals' idea of a consultation process. During the election campaign, they said they would consult with Canadians. We saw them do that with their policy on pipelines, but here, on something to do with public health, the bill basically guts the consultation process.

From the testimony we heard in committee, my colleague knows it is essential that there be community buy-in for these injection sites or consumption sites to be successful. Everybody wants anything to do with addicts to be successful in its implementation.

If an injection site goes into a community, it is going to be the local community that will have to pay for police enforcement. The province has to put out money for these things.

Ottawa, for example, has a Liberal mayor who is on the record as saying he is opposed to having an injection site in this community. The chief of police and the former chief of police have also stated that they are not in favour of this type of intervention in this community. Because the Liberals have cut the consultation process on this issue, does my colleague think that if the mayor, the chief of police, and stakeholders who are going to be responsible for enforcement and payment, are not onside with it, the minister should still put an injection site in Ottawa?

Mr. John Oliver: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to serve with the member on the health committee. We have worked together to make some really good recommendations and directions in our report.

With respect to supervised consumption sites and harm reduction, we heard from many witnesses how important these sites are as part of early treatment and early intervention and better management for people who are consuming.

We also heard from witnesses that the previous government's Respect for Communities Act, Bill C-2, introduced such stringent rules and 26 application criteria that we have not been able to open a new safe consumption site across Canada since Bill C-2 was

introduced. The Supreme Court has ruled on this and Bill C-37 would simply enshrine the court's ruling.

I would note that one of the five criteria is support and expressions of community support for the centre. I do believe there is appropriate response to community concerns and that part of the process of approval deals specifically with hearing from and looking for communities' expressions of support or their expressions of opposition.

•(1720)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would also like to express my appreciation to the hon. member for his contributions on the health committee. It is truly a pleasure working with him and note his leadership not only on the opioid file but on other issues that have come before our committee.

I do want to take issue with one fact that he represented in his speech, which is that the Minister of Health is doing everything possible under the circumstances. He specifically mentioned that the federal Minister of Health has implemented every single request that has been made by a provincial minister of health, but that is demonstrably not true. The provinces and cities have requested a number of things from the federal government, including improved treatment options, setting up a national command centre, requesting daily Health Canada briefings, and declaring a national public welfare emergency. The minister of health from my province of British Columbia specifically asked for that declaration. We know that the federal health minister has thus far rejected that request, so she is not doing everything that could be done.

Does my hon. colleague know how many of the 38 recommendations from the health committee, which he sat on, including the very first one which was to declare a public health emergency, the government has implemented to date?

Mr. John Oliver: Madam Speaker, likewise, it is an honour to serve with the hon. member on the health committee. I do find that we work together quite collaboratively on these issues.

It is really important that we remember in the House as we are debating Bill C-37 that there are federal and provincial jurisdictions at work here. Many of the situations and cases that the hon. member mentioned are really provincial authority. We are in the middle of a health accord negotiation. There is \$6 billion available for mental health and addictions for provinces from the federal government which would go a long way toward implementing the treatment programs and services that some of these people need.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I recognize the next member on debate, I just want to advise him that unfortunately, I will have to cut the debate off, but he will be able to continue the next time the bill is before the House.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Brampton East.

Government Orders

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I present my thoughts on Bill C-37, I do want to say that I come from Brampton East, which has the second most diverse population in the entire country. We have five Sikh gurdwaras, four Hindu temples, four mosques, two churches, and we all live in great harmony. The events that happened in Quebec affected all of us across this country. A place of worship where people go to pray is no place for violence. We stand with our Muslim brothers and sisters and we pray for all of them that we recover united as Canadians.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

The bill proposes important legislative changes that would help to support the new recently announced Canadian drugs and substances strategy, a comprehensive, collaborative, and compassionate strategy made up of the four key pillars of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement, all of which are built on a strong foundation of evidence.

We are in the midst of a national public health crisis in Canada. In 2016, thousands of Canadians tragically died of accidental opioid overdoses, and more will die this year. Just last year in British Columbia alone, more than 900 people died from drug overdoses. That is an 80% increase from 2015. This is proof that the situation is getting worse. Deaths from overdoses will now be greater than deaths by car accidents. This tragic crisis continues to move eastward in Canada, with increasing drug seizures of fentanyl across our country.

As every member in this House knows, problematic substance use and addiction are serious public health issues. It seems that not a day goes by without seeing a story published in a Canadian newspaper about yet another overdose, another life lost, or another new dangerous drug on the streets. At the heart of these stories are everyday Canadians, their families, our communities.

Our government has taken action from day one. We are building on our five-point action plan to address opioid misuse. We have taken concrete steps, such as granting section 56 exemptions for the Dr. Peter Centre and extending the exemption for Insite for an additional four years. We made the overdose antidote more widely available in Canada. Last autumn, the Minister of Health co-hosted a conference and summit on opioids which resulted in 42 organizations bringing forward concrete proposals of their own. However, we must continue to respond to this tragedy in a way that is comprehensive, collaborative, and compassionate.

Bill C-37 would provide the government and law enforcement with the tools needed to support Canadian communities in addressing problematic substance use, including the opioid crisis.

With the dramatic increase in overdose deaths due to opioids occurring in Canada right now, it is crucial that the bill be passed swiftly.

Bill C-37 would demonstrate true support for communities grappling with the crisis by, among other things, removing unnecessary barriers to establishing supervised consumption sites. These barriers were put in place by the previous government in 2015.

When Bill C-37 passes, it will streamline the application process for supervised consumption sites by replacing the current 26 criteria set out in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to establish such a site with the requirement to submit evidence related to the five factors set out by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 2011 decision regarding Insite. These factors include: impact on crime rates; location conditions indicating need; a regulatory structure in place to support the facility; resources available to support its maintenance; and expressions of community support or opposition.

By reducing the number of criteria, the administrative burden on communities seeking to establish a supervised consumption site would be lessened. However, the health and safety of those operating these sites, their clients, and the surrounding community would not be compromised.

• (1725)

I want to take a moment to address the misunderstanding about these proposed amendments.

Some members of this House have contended that the views of a community would no longer be important in the assessment of an application to establish a supervised consumption site. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Supreme Court of Canada determined that the Minister of Health must consider expressions of community support or opposition when reviewing such applications.

Our government is respecting the Supreme Court of Canada's decision by proposing to include these factors in the legislation. The Government of Canada supports the need for community consultation in the application process for considering the establishment of supervised consumption sites. We understand and respect that communities may have valid concerns about a proposed site and that these concerns deserve to be heard and should be adequately addressed by applicants in their applications.

The proposed amendments would demonstrate that respect for communities is a multi-faceted issue. Yes, it means that the concerns of the community must be considered and addressed by the applicants; however, it also means that the federal government should not place any unnecessary barriers in the way of communities that want to establish a supervised consumption site as part of their local drug strategies.

Under Bill C-37, communities can be assured that their voices will be heard and that each application will be subject to a comprehensive review, yet it would do so without inevitably stalling the implementation of these life-saving programs in communities where they are wanted and needed. Just like any other regulated program, our government has a responsibility to the public.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have two and a half minutes to finish his speech and five minutes for questions and comments the next time this bill is before the House.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

AN ACT RESPECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DISPOSAL OF LAMPS CONTAINING MERCURY

The House resumed from November 28, 2016, consideration of the motion that Bill C-238, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury, be read a third time and passed.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I will take a moment to express my sincere sympathy for the families of the victims of the shooting at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec. The tragedy has shaken us all. We are all aware of the importance of continuing to strive to live together in harmony and understanding, and to be united in the face of this tragedy. There are no words to describe the horror of this act. It is important for us as parliamentarians to say that we must always fight against hateful messages and hate directed at those who are a little different from ourselves. We are all united in asserting that. I wish a speedy recovery to those who were wounded in that unspeakable attack.

I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-238, an act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury. As we know, mercury is a dangerous substance. It is an incredibly dangerous neurotoxin, which can cross the placental barrier and endanger the fetus, and can be found in breast milk. Therefore it should not be taken lightly. Very minor exposure to traces of mercury can damage the nervous system and even lower IQ levels. It can also cause tremors, insomnia, memory loss, neuromuscular changes, headaches, and other problems. It is not a substance to be taken lightly. That is why having a strategy for the safe disposal of certain lamps containing mercury is very important.

I support the bill of the Liberal member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, who took this initiative. It is very good and a step in the right direction. The NDP supports all initiatives relating to sustainable development. We want to minimize the presence of toxic substances that can threaten the balance and viability of our ecosystems. Unfortunately, biodiversity is currently diminishing from year to year. It is really something we need to consider. As you know, the NDP has always been a leader in environmental protection. We have put forward many bills to protect the environment. We have been working very hard on this for a long time, which is why we must figure out solutions to the unsafe disposal of mercury component lamps.

I, myself, was on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development when this bill was being studied. I asked questions about certain aspects of the bill that might be improved, to ensure that we had a sounder approach.

To explain the bill a little, it requires that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change develop and implement a national strategy for the safe disposal of bulbs containing mercury. It asks the minister, in cooperation with the provinces, the territories, industry stakeholders, and environmental groups, to work on establishing a

national strategy for the safe disposal of bulbs containing mercury. It also asks the minister to monitor and rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

On that point, I would personally have preferred that there be regulations to implement the strategy, but there are none in the bill. It is hard to have tangible action when there are no stringent regulations to be followed. This is one of the points in the strategy that could have been improved. As I was saying, this is a start, but the bill could have been tougher, firmer, and more rigorous. This is one of the first points.

Another point is that even though this is a federal responsibility, we are ultimately asking the municipalities to take action.

● (1735)

The risk is that the financial responsibility will be foisted on the municipalities. In reality, this is a federal government responsibility.

This is a concern I have shared with my colleague. Unfortunately, my concern has not been allayed and I am still worried. The financial burden of this federal responsibility should not be off-loaded on our colleagues in the municipalities. As we know, our colleagues in the municipalities already have their hands full and they have a lot of things they have to look after. They do not have a whole lot of ways to raise funds. We have to be careful not to weigh them down with more responsibilities.

I am going to talk a little about an extremely important principle when it comes to the environment: the expanded responsibility assigned to producers. It is important to understand this process, so that as little waste as possible ends up in landfill sites and so that it does not pollute those sites. That is why it is important to change the way we look at things. Unfortunately, we too often think that items that are no longer useful are trash or waste, when they should be thought of as resources. We should see trash as resources that can be reused at a later time.

Extended producer responsibility means that producers have to think about the parts or residual materials of an object that could be used for other purposes and that will be easy to recover and reuse at the end of the object's useful life. That is called extended producer responsibility. It is also known as cradle to cradle or circular economy. Instead of producing objects that will end up in the garbage and the landfill at the end of their useful life, producers should instead ensure that the various components of the object can be recovered later. This is especially important when there are other problems related to landfill sites, which are not easy to manage.

It is extremely important to ask questions in order to convert our economy into a circular economy. Producers need to take on extended responsibility. We cannot afford to keep throwing everything out. The planet has a lot of resources, but we must take better care of it than we are right now. It is extremely important.

Private Members' Business

Since 2001, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment has been promoting standards to reduce the amount of mercury in lamps sold in Canada. Those measures were introduced a while ago. Unfortunately, things are moving too slowly, and there is still a long way to go. There are far too many lamps containing mercury in landfills. We will need to work much harder on this.

I will close by saying how tremendously important it is for the government to raise awareness. Without an awareness campaign, if people do not know where to take lamps containing mercury for safe disposal and potential reuse, the strategy will fail. It is vital that we back it up with a public awareness and information campaign so that everyone knows how to dispose of lamps containing mercury.

As I said, municipalities are doing excellent work in waste management, but managing waste, or, as I prefer to say, resources, containing mercury is the federal government's job. The feds must not download this responsibility on to municipalities. It is extremely important for the federal government to step up and support municipalities on this.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on the bill brought forward by the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, an act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury.

Bill C-238 would build upon efforts already under way across Canada to reduce mercury emissions to the environment. Reducing mercury emissions is an important goal, given the serious effects mercury can have on human health and the environment. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin. It can cause damage to the brain, central nervous system, kidney, lungs, and is particularly damaging to the development of the human fetus, infants, and young children.

In terms of environmental impacts, mercury biomagnifies as it moves up the food chain, meaning that higher levels of mercury are found in animals higher on the food chain. This can lead to increased exposure for fish and wildlife, as well as humans who consume certain kinds of fish. Increased exposure means increased health problems, including slower growth, reproductive failure, and the development of abnormal behaviours. Mercury can travel long distances in the atmosphere. It has been found to accumulate in Canada's Arctic.

Given these impacts on human health and the environment, the Government of Canada is committed to minimizing and, when feasible, eliminating human sources of mercury emissions.

Domestic mercury emissions have been reduced by approximately 90% since the 1970s, thanks to a wide range of initiatives to address mercury emissions. However, more can be done.

In 2010, the Government of Canada released the risk management strategy for mercury. The strategy provides a comprehensive description of the government's plans and progress in managing the risks associated with mercury. One example is the products containing mercury regulations, which came into force in November 2015. These regulations prohibit the manufacture and import of

products containing mercury, with some exemptions for essential products that have no technically or economically viable alternatives. In the case of lamps, the regulations set mercury content limits for fluorescent and other types of lamps that require labels to inform consumers about the presence of mercury.

In April 2016, Environment and Climate Change Canada published the proposed code of practice for environmentally sound management of end-of-life lamps containing mercury. The code provides guidance and information relevant to managing these lamps at the end of their life. The final code of practice was expected to be published by the end of 2016.

International initiatives to address mercury pollution are another important element of the Government of Canada's approach. It is estimated that 95% of human caused mercury deposits in Canada come from foreign sources. To help reduce the impact of transboundary pollution on Canada, and particularly impact on Canada's Arctic where mercury tends to deposit, the government signed the Minamata convention on mercury in 2013. We are in the process of finalizing the necessary implementation measures required to ratify the treaty.

The bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, would complement these and other existing measures to address mercury pollution by focusing on one particular source of emissions, light bulbs. Many energy efficient bulbs, including compact fluorescent lamps used in the homes and workplaces of many Canadians, contain a small amount of mercury. This mercury may be released if the lamp breaks or is improperly disposed of as regular garbage.

The bill would mandate the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. Amendments made to the bill at committee serve to reinforce the purpose of the bill and the need for co-operation across jurisdictions in the development of a national strategy. For example, the bill now speaks of safe and environmentally sound disposal.

The environmentally sound end-of-life management of lamps containing mercury involves a range of activities, including collection, processing, recycling, diversion, and storage. The national strategy contemplated by the bill would capture any number of these activities, rather than the disposal of lamps containing mercury in a landfill. This terminology is consistent with the proposed codes of practice for end-of-life lamps containing mercury.

Private Members' Business

● (1745)

The amendments made at committee also strengthen the bill by recognizing the jurisdiction over the protection of the environment, including matters related to waste management, is shared among all levels of government in Canada. Removing the requirement on the minister to implement the national strategy recognizes this fact as the minister cannot implement the national strategy on her own. As a result, the bill would require the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to work with other parties, including the provincial and territorial governments, in developing a national strategy.

The bill also intends to capture other interested governments such as municipal and indigenous governments that may have important roles in the implementation of a national strategy. The minister will need to co-operate with them, but also consult with other interested parties, including stakeholders, in developing a national plan of this kind.

The bill lists examples of the kinds of things that the national strategy could include. Possible elements set out in the bill will not only help guide collaboration and consultation with other interested parties, including stakeholders, but will also help ensure that the national strategy does not duplicate efforts already under way.

The strategy can evolve to ensure that the range of perspectives are considered in the development of the strategy. One possible element of the national strategy is a plan to promote public awareness of the importance of disposing of mercury containing lamps safely and in an environmentally sound manner. Many Canadians are currently unaware that these bulbs should not be disposed of in regular garbage because they may break and release mercury into the environment.

The bill sets out a flexible framework for development the national strategy, but also contains important mandatory requirements. In particular, it requires the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to develop and report on the national strategy.

The first report to Parliament setting out the national strategy must occur within 15 sitting days of December 31, 2018, or within two years after royal assent, whichever is later. Every five years following the initial tabling, the minister must report on the strategy, including his or her conclusions and recommendations regarding the strategy. These reporting requirements promote transparency and accountability, and will help ensure that the national strategy achieves its intended purpose.

I sit on the environment committee along with the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. As we were going through the bill to make amendments, the importance of this issue became really apparent. I happened to be looking up at the ceiling and I noticed all the lights. I started to count them. There were over 70 fluorescent lights in the one committee room. Then I just happened to be in the Library of Parliament, looking over the speech. When I looked up and started counting lights. I got to over 250 and I still had not counted all of them. These are just two rooms in the millions of rooms in up to 10 million homes in our country that presently use compact fluorescent light bulbs.

It is so important that we develop a national strategy that can work with industry, that can work with all levels of government, that can

work with innovation to try to drive forward new technologies, as we are presently, which are more efficient and more cost effective and will eventually eliminate the need for fluorescent bulbs altogether.

Once again, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for bringing the bill forward. The government supports the bill, as amended, and looks forward to working with other governments, indigenous groups and stakeholders to develop an effective national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury.

● (1750)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-238, the national strategy for Safe and Environmentally Sound Disposal of Lamps Containing Mercury act.

First, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, for bringing the bill forward. The bill serves an important purpose by contributing to efforts to reduce mercury emissions and releases. Mercury is a toxic subject that is harmful to the environment and human health, which is why the Government of Canada is committed to eliminating human sources of mercury emissions when feasible.

Bill C-238 calls for a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury. The bill would fill gaps within the existing framework governing management of mercury in Canada. Although robust measures are already in place to manage mercury emissions and products containing mercury, many Canadians are unaware of the dangers of improper disposal of lamps containing mercury. Many Canadians do not have ready access to facilities where lamps containing mercury can be disposed of safely and in an environmentally sound manner.

The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development studied the bill. I was there for one meeting. In a very collaborative way and arguably a way which all committees ideally would operate, adopted amendments that would facilitate a co-operative and collaborative approach to the development of the national strategy. These amendments are consistent with the purpose of the bill. The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has noted that the bill is meant to be the beginning of a conversation. The amendments made at committee facilitate that goal by expanding the range of perspectives to be considered in the conversation and by ensuring flexibility in determining the elements of the national strategy.

The amendments made at committee strengthen the bill by recognizing that jurisdiction over waste management is shared between different levels of government. The national strategy is to be developed by the Minister of Environment, in cooperation with representatives of provincial, territorial, and other interested governments. The addition of “other interested governments” improves the original bill by capturing other governments, such as municipal and indigenous governments, that would like to have a role in developing and implementing the national strategy.

Private Members' Business

A related amendment is that the minister shall consult with “all interested persons and organizations”, rather than only requiring consultation with environmental groups and industry. This would help to ensure that a range of perspectives would be considered in the development of the strategy.

There are a number of reasons why the co-operative, flexible framework set out in the bill is essential to the success of the national strategy.

First and foremost, co-operation is important because jurisdiction over matters related to waste management is shared among different levels of government. The Government of Canada currently regulates international and interprovincial movements of hazardous waste, manages waste on federal lands, and has extensive authorities to regulate toxic substances and products that contain them. Provincial and territorial jurisdictions regulate waste management operations and facilities and the end-of-life management of products. Municipal governments collect and manage waste for recycling and disposal. Bill C-238 recognizes that these various levels of government have a role to play in the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury.

A collaborative approach to managing mercury emissions is nothing new. For years, important work has been coordinated by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to address various sources of mercury pollution, including lamps containing mercury.

One example of action at the CCME level is the Canada-wide action plan on extended producer responsibility. In 2009, all provinces and the federal government committed to implementing the Canada-wide action plan, which includes action on mercury lamps. Extended producer responsibility, or EPR, is an approach where producers are responsible for dealing with products at their end of life. Essentially, EPR shifts responsibility for dealing with waste products upstream to the producer and away from municipalities and general taxpayers. EPR can be an effective way to divert certain products from landfills and we have seen some success in the context of mercury lamps. Four provinces, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island, have implemented specific regulatory programs to collect and recycle mercury lamps.

● (1755)

This brings me to another reason why the co-operative approach put forth in the bill is so important. This approach recognizes that a number of efforts are already under way in different jurisdictions to minimize pollution from lamps containing mercury. Some provinces, and even certain areas within provinces, are further ahead than others in terms of managing lamps containing mercury in an environmentally sound manner. In other areas, such as much of the north, the infrastructure to properly divert these lamps from landfills simply does not exist.

There are also a number of federal initiatives to address mercury lamps. For example, in April of 2016, the Government of Canada published a Proposed Code of Practice for the Environmentally Sound Management of End-of-life Lamps Containing Mercury. I do not know how these titles are arrived at. It seems there is kind of an art form that goes with the creation of law that there has to be a title that runs for about four paragraphs.

The code of practice is a voluntary tool developed to complement provincial, territorial, and municipal initiatives and to promote the best practices for managing lamps containing mercury at the end of life. By setting out a co-operative framework, the bill would allow the national strategy to complement, rather than duplicate, existing federal, provincial, and municipal efforts to manage lamps containing mercury. The bill would not mandate what the national strategy must include. Instead, it would require that the strategy be developed co-operatively.

The bill would provide guidance by setting out certain elements that could be included in the national strategy. For example, the national strategy could include guidelines for facilities involved in the safe and environmentally sound disposal of mercury. This could be a facility like the recycling facility in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and similar facilities across Canada. However, the elements of the national strategy are not predetermined by the bill. Rather, the strategy may include any elements to reflect the work and consultations that the minister will undertake with provinces, territories, municipalities, and other interested parties in the development of the strategy.

The bill focuses national attention on an important issue, an issue on which we have a real opportunity to reduce mercury emissions. I want to again thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his initiative and for bringing the bill forward. I expect that a national strategy will have an important impact on ensuring environmentally sound management of lamps containing mercury.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Seeing no one rise on debate, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has five minutes of reply.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure I will not need a full five minutes. I will say that I am truly humbled to rise again in this place to speak to Bill C-238, a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury act. The member who spoke previously is correct; it is a mouthful.

I would like to start by thanking my amazing family. It is not always easy to come here to Ottawa. In fact, I am missing my son's hockey game right now; he will take the ice in about a minute. We miss a lot of things by coming here to do the good work for the people in our communities, and I am proud to do the work for the people of the community of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

I have to thank the members of my team for their incredibly hard work on Bill C-238. This started out as nothing more than a bright idea, and they have been able to turn this into something tangible, into a private member's bill that is now at third reading and hopefully, fingers crossed, knock on wood, on its way to becoming a law.

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My riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour inspired this bill. We have many innovative businesses in the Dartmouth Burnside industrial park. One of them, Dan-X Recycling, caught my eye. I have mentioned Dan-X before, but this facility is able to efficiently dispose of mercury-bearing light bulbs in a safe and environmentally sound way. This facility is an excellent example of the clean tech industry, and I am proud to have it in my riding. Just think, if Bill C-238 passes, we could improve the green economy by encouraging more facilities like Dan-X right across the country. Now that is a clean economy.

I have stated before that Bill C-238 is about working together, but I do not think I realized how true this would be. I have been humbled by the supportive and kind words I have received from colleagues throughout this House. Bill C-238 as amended passed unanimously at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Many members have spoken to this bill in the several readings in this House, but my favourite comment so far has to be from the member for Yellowhead who said, “this bill is a winner”. I thank my friend for that comment. I would be remiss if I did not mention the member for Abbotsford, who through this process has become a friend. He sits on the environment committee with me and he has had some very good, supportive words to say about this bill.

Bill C-238 has created an incredible dialogue around mercury pollution, but it has also shown that when we care about the environment, when we care about Canadians, and when we care about making real change, we can work across party lines to make it happen. This is what Canadians want and this is what they expect from us in this House. I firmly believe that Bill C-238 has the potential to solve the issue of mercury-bearing light bulb pollution in our lands and in our waters. I encourage all members of this House to support Bill C-238, regarding the development of a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury act.

Let us continue to work together. Let us solve this issue together to ensure that we leave this country a better place for all Canadians to enjoy.

● (1800)

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.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 30(7), the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-277 under private members' business.

* * *

[Translation]

FRAMEWORK ON PALLIATIVE CARE IN CANADA ACT

The House resumed from November 23, 2016 consideration of the motion that Bill C-277, An Act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has eight minutes to complete her speech.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I did not think I would have the chance to complete this speech, so I am pleased to use the eight minutes I have left to do that.

In the first part of my speech, I had noted some things that the bill's sponsor could come back to in committee. I had also suggested that she include the first nations governments in the consultation, because that is crucial. Often, the cultural approach to death is not really incorporated. Given the federal government's duty to the first nations communities, it is essential that they be at the discussion table to express their needs.

In addition, there are enormous needs for palliative care in indigenous communities, because there are virtually no projects. Often, the communities are too small, so the feeling is that resources cannot be allocated specifically to palliative care. A number of first nations communities have no long-term care facility. Elders are therefore cared for by their province's health care system.

When we go out and meet with the people who provide palliative care, we see that they are interested in developing projects. I have been to the Maison du Boulot Blanc in Amos, right next to the community of Pikogan. It sometimes takes in people from the Pikogan indigenous community who need its services. The people who work there are very happy to do that, but they say themselves that it is not the same, that the community is much more involved and there are a lot of people who come to support the dying person.

They do what they can in terms of needs, but if there were some openness to allocating federal funds for specific projects for the first nations, they would very definitely be open to having a room set up and decorated based on the person's needs. That would reflect the desired approach, which is to accommodate clients who need palliative care.

This is something that will have to be discussed in committee. I urge my colleague to give immediate thought to people from indigenous communities who might be interested in talking about their situations and how they could be involved in delivering palliative care.

Although the administration of palliative care itself falls under provincial jurisdiction, I believe that the federal government has a role to play in bringing all the stakeholders together to discuss best practices. It is not about taking a paternalistic approach and bringing everyone together to tell them to look at the best practices happening elsewhere. It is about creating room for dialogue, where everyone can share their successes and failures in order to move palliative care forward.

We often forget certain particularities associated with palliative care. Pediatric palliative care is extremely difficult. How do we support a child who is dying of cancer or some genetic disease? We have a lot to learn by sharing ideas on this.

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For instance, it is important to ensure that children who need palliative care are not forced to choose between being close to home or in a pediatric care centre. They are often hospitalized for long periods and find themselves far from home. Parents sometimes decide to bring their child home when it is time for palliative care to begin. When we talk about a special client group, it is often those in remote areas who have a hard time getting the care they need.

It would be helpful, then, to be able to talk about our practices in order to overcome these challenges. If the various ministries, provinces, and agencies involved could share tools with the rest of the country, we would all be better off.

● (1805)

Other patients are often neglected. For example, how does one help a person with a fairly serious intellectual deficiency prepare for death?

I have had to do it over the course of my career and it is not easy. Caregivers do not always have all the tools they need. They are used to working in a context where the person understands death and what is happening to him or her. However, it is often more difficult to help someone outside that context. I therefore think it is important for caregivers to have that skill.

When it comes to palliative care, for example, some deaths will affect caregivers more than others. That is why it is also important to talk about the distress they experience. Regardless of where the caregiver works, some cases will cause a lot of pain and sorrow. It is also important to be able to talk about that aspect of palliative care so that caregivers do not carry that pain and sorrow with them throughout their careers and can resist breaking down at some point.

Take, for example, soldiers who are deployed overseas and who have to be there for someone who is dying because there is no other choice. Sometimes these experiences are traumatizing and become difficult to live with after many years in the field.

In my opinion, it would be worthwhile adding this other element to the bill on palliative care, that is, monitoring the distress of caregivers, because we are hearing more and more about this issue.

Working with death every day is difficult. I believe it would be beneficial to monitor the distress of caregivers, especially those working in palliative care centres and paediatric and neonatal departments, who do their best to save infants, but are sometimes confronted by the reality that there is no other option but to let them go. These life situations can be difficult, and it would be advisable to monitor this aspect of public health.

I would like to thank my colleague and the House once again for letting me finish my speech. I look forward to my colleagues' comments.

● (1810)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to support my colleague, the member for Sarnia—Lambton, and her Bill C-277, an act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada.

Before continuing, I must first congratulate my colleague for her hard work since she was elected in 2015, and for earning the title of

most collegial MP. She was awarded that title by her colleagues in the House, from all parties, when the prize was given by *Maclean's* and *L'Actualité* last fall. It speaks to the unstinting work done by my colleague, particularly on her present bill.

We are therefore very happy to have an engineer in our Conservative caucus as opposition science critic. That is why I am happy to speak today in support of her Bill C-277, a bill that has attracted attention from key health care stakeholders in my riding, Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Like a number of rural ridings in Canada, we find that we have an aging population, and we can already anticipate that the demand for palliative care will rise considerably over the coming years. It has already started. It is therefore important to talk about it and give ourselves time to be well prepared.

Following a Supreme Court decision in Carter, last year, this Parliament passed Bill C-14, which provided a legislative framework for physician-assisted dying. Although the bill was well received by some people who wanted to avail themselves of this right, others had some concerns, because they wanted to make sure that this was not the only option available. In my riding, just like elsewhere in Canada, this is a real question: will we provide only a bill like that, or will we provide other types of care? The other types of care are much needed.

As my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton noted, in the final report of the external committee on options for a legislative response to Carter v. Canada, the Supreme Court stated that a request for physician-assisted death cannot be truly voluntary if the proper palliative care is not available to alleviate the suffering of patients.

This is where we are today. The bill proposed by my colleague seeks to improve the options available to Canadians at the end of their lives. It truly seeks to encourage consultations and dialogue with the provinces to develop a national framework so that palliative care is a real option. In fact, the plan highlights the importance of having access to palliative care of higher quality than what is currently available.

It is important that our seniors and other people with terminal illnesses are protected with healthy, safe, and comfortable options in the last stages of their lives if they do not wish to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying. This is an extremely important point. People must have access to high-quality care to be able to live as long as possible in palliative care facilities. This will prevent many people from even thinking about requesting that their lives be terminated. The dignity of people depends on it.

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I would like to highlight the incredible work done in my riding by the Maison Desjardins de soins palliatifs in Rivière-du-Loup, which has provided an enormous amount of care since it opened in 2009. I should also mention the mission of the Fondation Hélène-Caron, which will soon be serving the region of Montmagny and l'Islet through the Maison d'Hélène. Passing Bill C-277 will send a message to organizations like those, all across Canada, that their work is recognized and greatly appreciated.

Last month, Dr. Louise La Fontaine, vice-president of the Société québécoise des médecins en soins palliatifs and a resident of Notre-Dame-du-Portage in my riding, wrote to me to say that Canadians across the country have joined together to draw attention to the importance of palliative care.

She recommends that a national policy be developed in order to considerably improve the quality and consistency of palliative care and access to it. She recommends examining and assessing new models of integrated care, broadening accreditation standards throughout the entire health network, and focusing on areas such as symptom management and advance care planning. Practitioners must also be trained so that they can work in accordance with the various models for integrating palliative care into the management of severe chronic illness.

•(1815)

That is convenient because many of the things she mentioned would be part of the legislative framework if my colleague's Bill C-277 passes.

By asking the Minister of Health to consult with her provincial counterparts, we can ensure that every region of Canada is included in the discussion and that best practices and innovative ideas in the palliative care field are shared. I want to emphasize that because it is an extremely important aspect of the bill. My colleague who just spoke mentioned first nations. Canadian regions differ from one another, of course. One feature of this bill is that it takes all those differences into account and creates a framework for sharing the good practices that some regions are using and looking at which ones would work elsewhere.

I encourage all of my parliamentary colleagues to join me in supporting Bill C-277 so that we can help people across our great nation. If passed, this legislative framework will meet their medical needs and give us a plan that reflects the looming new demographic reality.

I will close by saying that the Lower St. Lawrence region, where my hometown of La Pocatière is located, is the oldest in Canada. What my colleague wants to put in place to facilitate the aging of the population affects us in particular. The bill proposes to provide quality care and enable people to make a fully informed and conscious decision, and to live out their days in an environment where their dignity will be respected.

My brother-in-law died last year after having cancer for seven years. He was treated at a hospice in the Eastern Townships. I had the opportunity to visit him twice. My sister stayed with him for three months.

The Eastern Townships, where Magog and Sherbrooke are located, is well developed. The care offered in the region is already

excellent. The experience that these people have developed over the years can most certainly be shared with Canada's other regions.

From what I could see, the quality of care that my brother-in-law received was incredible. I think it is important to mention that.

My colleague came to my riding last week. Our plan was to have her come to my riding to visit palliative care homes, but unfortunately, the weather did not co-operate. I want to thank her for making the effort to meet with my constituents, who have spent a great deal of energy and time fundraising. Palliative care homes are often autonomous thanks to the donations they receive. Donations keep these homes open and operating, as is the case in Rivière-du-Loup.

In Montmagny, Hélène Caron, who is in charge of the project, has cancer. She gives a lot of her time to ensuring that this home exists. It is not a self-serving gesture. She devotes her time to the people and the good of her community.

The bill is unifying. I think that all parties should support it and see it through. Then we could have a national framework for all palliative care homes and the necessary funding to ensure that they are operational.

•(1820)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, members from all parties in the House, including myself, established a committee on palliative and compassionate care. The mandate of the committee was to study the nature and scope of palliative care in Canada. I would like to congratulate the member for Sarnia—Lambton for following up on the committee's work with this important initiative.

[English]

My inspiration for joining the all-party parliamentary committee on palliative care, which was an ad hoc committee, was Teresa Dellar, a friend and Montreal social worker who founded the West Island Palliative Care Residence in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis in Montreal's West Island

[Translation]

The residence has 23 beds making it the largest palliative care facility in Canada. It is a model for palliative and end-of-life care across Canada and throughout the world.

[English]

I had the joy and honour of being present at Rideau Hall this past November 25 with Teresa's husband, Gavin Fernandes, and sons Jonathon and Nicholas, when Teresa was awarded the Meritorious Service Cross by the Governor General for her vision and pioneering work in palliative care—and I would underscore that the member for Sarnia—Lambton happened to be there as well that day.

Some amendments will be necessary to make the bill better fit the constitutional and practical realities of health care in Canada.

For example, clause 2(1) calls on the Minister of Health to:

develop and implement a framework designed to give Canadians access to palliative care—provided through hospitals, home care, long-term care facilities and residential hospices—that, among other things,

(a) defines what palliative care is;

Unfortunately, it is not within federal jurisdiction to give, or require provinces and territories to give, access to palliative care.

That said, the federal government is well placed to support the efforts of the provinces and territories and stakeholder organizations, by focusing on aligning and extending federal levers in relation to health care system improvements.

We have already seen the government move in this direction during negotiations over a new health care accord, when it offered \$5 billion over 10 years to the provinces for home care, a commitment that Marie-France Juneau, executive director of NOVA West Island, formerly the Victorian Order of Nurses, no doubt welcomed.

NOVA West Island offers indispensable services in a home setting to Montreal West Islanders dealing with cancer and other debilitating diseases like ALS.

Federal funding would benefit NOVA and its patients and leverage the efforts of its volunteers. In 2015–16 alone, 16,532 volunteer hours were donated by 232 active volunteers lending a hand with respect to a number of NOVA's services.

Clause 4(1) of the bill also requires amendment. Currently, it requires that the Minister of Health undertake a review and table a report on the effectiveness of the stipulated palliative care framework every five years. However, this would require the minister to report on progress in an area where the government has few levers to directly make change.

Instead, therefore, it would be more advisable to have the government simply report on the state of palliative care in Canada after five years, in this way aligning the bill with the law on medical aid in dying, which requires a parliamentary review on the state of palliative care in Canada within five years of its coming into force.

The federal government is also not in a position to dictate to the provinces what specifically constitutes medically necessary services that must be provided to be eligible for federal funding under the Canada Health Act.

It is further worth noting that there is, in fact, no positive right to publicly funded health care in Canada. This was affirmed in the 2005 Chaoulli decision, where the Supreme Court said, “The Charter does not confer a freestanding constitutional right to health care”, even though medicare is rightly considered a de facto right by Canadians—an entrenched, morally rooted societal norm, I would argue.

The federal government has never waded into defining what actually constitutes a medically necessary service. Nonetheless, I believe Canadians will come to expect palliative care as something that should morally and ethically be broadly made available to them at end of life—in other words, a de facto right.

● (1825)

The question is how this right will come to be realized. Some believe it will materialize through the courts. There are those who argue that under section 7 of the charter, the section that affirms the

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right to life, liberty, and security of the person, individuals must be afforded autonomous choice at the end of life, the basic principle at the core of the medical aid in dying legislation. However, if the degree of pain control provided by palliative care is not available, an individual's choice has in fact been limited.

In terms of section 15, the charter's equality provision, others make the argument that current provincial palliative care programs, although not technically viewed as medically necessary since the aim is not to cure but to care, de facto discriminate according to disability because they are generally aimed at those dying from cancer. It is interesting to note in this regard that the West Island Palliative Care Residence, once again a leader, caters not only to cancer patients but also to those with other terminal illnesses. A 2014 *Globe and Mail* article highlighting the residence stated:

At the outset, 98 per cent of palliative-care patients had terminal cancer... Increasingly, however, the hospice is seeing more patients with end-stage cardiovascular and renal disease, and with conditions such as ALS and multiple sclerosis

Also, palliative care is generally needed by those who are older. Therefore, some argue that the absence of broad access to palliative care amounts to a form of age discrimination.

I would like to take a moment to discuss the West Island Palliative Care Residence's vision for expanding palliative care in Canada. I believe it dovetails with the general framework and intent of Bill C-277. In particular, I would like to propose that the government partner with the residence, given its reputation as a national leading edge centre of excellence in palliative care, in advancing the palliative care agenda in Canada.

The residence draws on a community, namely Montreal's West Island, which harbours a critical mass of resources, including the leadership talents of medical practitioners connected to the McGill University and Université de Montréal medical centres. The residence has an important role to play in education and training and in the transfer of practice-based research and knowledge to the broader Canadian community. It intends to play this role by creating a newly formed division called the Montreal institute for palliative care. It is my hope that the minister will seize the opportunity to partner with the institute in fulfilling the government's expressed commitment to palliative care.

It is often said that the measure of a society's degree of enlightenment and civilization is found in how it treats its minorities and the extent to which it internalizes the principle of the equality of all its citizens, in the manner in which it accepts and integrates those with disabilities, physical and intellectual, and in how compassionately it embraces those struggling with mental illness. However, I would add to this list how it supports and comforts its citizens at the most vulnerable moment of their life; that is, at the end of life itself.

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I recently read some interesting words of our Governor General, His Excellency, the Right Hon. David Johnston, which I am paraphrasing now. He said that the idea of Canada was worthy of expression and refinement. If the Canadian idea is embodied in, among other things, our national publicly funded health care system, then to make palliative care a more prominent part of that system is to further refine the idea of medicare and of what it means to be Canadian.

Let Canada show the world once again, like we have so many other times before, what it means to be a profoundly civilized nation, a nation that gathers its collective resources to enhance the dignity of the individual at the very moment when dignity itself is everything.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, anyone who has watched a loved one suffer through the ordeal of a terminal illness understands the profound importance of palliative and hospice care on behalf of the patient and for the families and loved ones.

I join my caucus in stressing, over the course of this debate, the fundamental right we also stressed in debate on Bill C-14. The New Democrats believe that every Canadian has a right to high quality end-of-life care.

According to the government's own mortality projections, the mortality rate will increase by 33% by 2020, making the need for palliative care as a thoughtfully laid out national strategy an increasingly urgent one, even more imperative within the context of medical-assisted dying.

Current, nearly 25% of the total cost of palliative care is borne by families, and significant disparities remain across Canada with respect to access to end-of-life care, quality of care and those out of pocket expenses. At least 50% of hospice palliative care services are funded by charitable donations, which continues to restrict the size, scope and access Canadians have to palliative programs.

Very few Canadian provinces have designated hospice palliative care as a core service under their provincial health plan. In the remaining provinces, hospice palliative care may be included in provincial home care budgets or other health service budgets, leaving the funding vulnerable to redistribution and cuts. That is why the New Democrats believe we must have a national strategy that can protect the palliative care of Canadians who have access to it, expand access to care for Canadians who do not have it, and improve the quality and affordability of care for all.

I am happy today to speak in support of the bill.

The New Democrats were surprised to find this year's federal budget contained zero federal funds earmarked for palliative care, especially after we fought to incorporate palliative care into the Liberal majority joint committee report on physician assisted dying.

Earlier this year, New Democrat Charlie Angus tabled Motion No. 46, which would accomplish much of what this bill would.

•(1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind the hon. member that it is the member for Timmins—James Bay and she should not mention his name.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. It was a slip of the tongue.

Among other things, the motion called for the government to work with the provinces and territories on a flexible integrated model of palliative care by establishing a universal right to palliative care and by implementing a pan-Canadian palliative and end-of-life care strategy that would be tied to dedicated funding.

As I said, we expected this funding to be in the government's first budget but it was not. Here we are in the House debating a private member's bill from a member of the Conservative caucus, which indicates to me that we are at a momentous point in time. There is broad agreement across party lines on this issue and so it is time to face our responsibility to governance that makes progress on human rights and end-of-life care. That we are ready to be progressive on palliative care is momentous and I applaud my hon. colleague for utilizing her private member's bill for this noble initiative.

I was disconcerted when the previous Conservative government eliminated the federally funded national secretariat on palliative end-of-life care. Had it left the support funding intact, maybe we would not be discussing this matter today but would have a resolution and the member for Sarnia—Lambton would not have had to table this bill. I am sure she has other noble causes she could turn her attention to.

As for the current government, the Liberals have had ample opportunity to enshrine quality palliative care as a right for all Canadians, no matter where they live. They could have developed a national strategy that would have eased the burden on both the dying and their families on one end and health care providers on the other, but it was not a priority. I am still flabbergasted when I think of the callousness demonstrated as debate on Bill C-14 was introduced with absolutely no indication that anyone in the government understood the responsibility to secure end-of-life care standards for human beings.

The most significant reason I asked to speak to the bill today was I wanted to lament the unnecessary suffering in the reality of our systemic inadequacies. A national strategy would address these sufferings. I want to hear in person the government's rationale for choosing not to act on this issue.

The New Democrats were surprised to find that the 2016 federal budget contained zero federal funds earmarked for palliative care, especially after we fought for the joint committee on physician-assisted dying to incorporate palliative care.

Given the lack of health care spending in the federal budget, it is no surprise that palliative care was missing. Hopefully by now all of us understand this, that home care is very relevant to this issue. The fact that the Liberal promise of \$3 billion for home care turned out to be fiction is also very disconcerting as we take stock of our health care system, its mandate and purpose and know that to move forward we have to include palliative care options that patients and their families deserve to expect.

The Canadian Cancer Society has stated that improvements to the palliative care system in Canada are desperately needed. Without clear national standards and accountabilities, individual jurisdictions are left to develop their own policies, programs, and guidelines, resulting in inconsistent or inadequate access across the country.

In Ontario, for instance, 40% of cancer patients do not receive a palliative assessment in their last year of life. In some regions of Atlantic and Western Canada, administrative data showed that less than half of people who died in a hospital received palliative care. Remarkably, there are many jurisdictions in the country where we do not even know how many Canadians receive quality palliative care. We lack consistent and ongoing data collection at a systematic level, which leaves us unable to more effectively hold our health care systems accountable to make positive changes.

• (1835)

Also, it is not just an issue of data collection. It is vital that any national palliative care strategy takes into account the geographic, regional, and cultural diversity of urban and rural Canada. It must respect our diverse cultural, spiritual, and familial needs, including Canada's first nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

According to Dr. Mary Lou Kelley, research chair in palliative care at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, the federal health care dollars that would help indigenous people receive end-of-life care at home have not kept up with the increasing demand. Health care for first nations is the responsibility of the federal government, and it does provide some home care services, but the system was never designed to provide complex health care to people with chronic or advanced terminal diseases.

Members might imagine my disappointment that the words “indigenous”, “first nations”, “Inuit”, or “Métis” do not appear anywhere in the text of Bill C-227. However, that is not a deal breaker because it is something that can be addressed meaningfully as we move forward on a national strategy.

New Democrats believe strongly that any legislation that deals with the matter of palliative care must take into account the geographical, regional, and cultural diversity of our urban and rural Canada, and Canada's first nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

As our population ages, palliative care will become an ever-increasing function of the health care system. The federal government needs to support health care workers with the training and resources necessary to deliver it all across Canada. All Canadians deserve to live their final days in dignity and comfort. That is why there is an urgent need to address the significant disparities that remain across Canada with respect to end-of-life care, quality of care, and out-of-pocket costs.

For years now, New Democrats have worked to improve palliative care services for patients and their families. As the party that founded public health care in Canada—

• (1840)

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

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to rise today in the House to support my colleague's hard work on Bill C-277, an act providing for the development of a

framework on palliative care in Canada. We are in a time where Canada is seeing an aging population, and it is our role as parliamentarians to help prepare our economy and our health care system for the coming decades.

Private Members' Business

First, it is important to understand what exactly palliative care is. For someone who has a life-threatening condition or a serious illness, palliative care is used to help improve the overall quality of life, reduce and/or relieve any physical and psychological symptoms, help individuals have a more peaceful and dignified death, and provide support to families and friends while an individual is dying and afterwards.

Palliative care can be provided in a variety of settings. It is really dependent on the options and availabilities within a community. Palliative care is provided at hospitals, individuals' homes, long-term facilities, and hospices.

The bill ensures that all Canadians have a real choice in regard to their end-of-life plans, something that is extremely important now that physician-assisted dying is legal. The Supreme Court itself stated that a request for physician-assisted death cannot be truly voluntary if the option of proper palliative care is not available to alleviate a person's suffering.

As I've said in previous speeches, assisted suicide should only be made available on the rarest of occasions. Canadians expect and deserve a choice between quality palliative care and assisted death. The government has already committed to one of those, and it is now time for it to commit to the importance of high-quality palliative care in Canada.

We know that all parties are in favour of palliative care for Canadians, but we must ensure that all parties agree that the bill is in fact needed in Canada.

I will not lie, I do have some concerns about the current government's agenda when it comes to palliative care. The Liberals started off with promising all Canadians an immediate \$3-billion injection for home care, including palliative care, but now the Liberals have changed course. The Liberals are using the urgency of palliative care in communities as a bargaining tool, and that, in my opinion, is absolutely offensive. The provinces that have agreed to the Liberals' terms when renegotiating the health accord were given funding for both mental health and home care, while others that have not yet agreed to the Liberals' terms have received absolutely nothing.

Again we see a lot of talk on home care specifically. I am not saying that home care should not be incorporated in the promised new funding, but to completely eliminate palliative care from the promised funding would be irresponsible.

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The government must assure Canadians that there will in fact be some designation of money to palliative care. As I already said, the need for palliative care services is increasing. Currently, only 30% of Canadians have access to good quality palliative care and this is problematic. We must ensure that the government properly allocates some of the promised investment into palliative care, and ensure that this bill be supported by everyone.

Bill C-277 will ensure that action is taken to define services that would be covered. It would introduce a standard training requirement for various levels of care providers, and it would help to collect the necessary data to ensure palliative care is successful in Canada.

There is no reason for any party to oppose such a well-thought-out bill that has the support of so many stakeholders across the country including the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, Pallium Canada, ARPA, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Kidney Foundation, the ALS Society, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, and the more than 50 organization members of the quality care coalition.

It is by working hard with organizations and bringing awareness to the need for palliative care that we can make a difference and ensure that individuals at the end of their lives are under the best possible care. This allows families to feel comforted and individuals to die with dignity.

In my riding of Oshawa, there is a wonderful individual by the name of Dr. Gillian Gilchrist. Dr. Gilchrist worked at the Oshawa General Hospital as the medical director of the palliative care team. She was the driving force behind the first palliative care unit at Oshawa General Hospital in 1981, and is considered a pioneer in providing palliative care within our community and raising awareness of the need for end-of-life care.

• (1845)

Dr. Gilchrist, along with her team, were on call 24-7, over all of Durham region.

Today, Lakeridge Health, which the Oshawa General Hospital has become a part of, and Queen's University, have partnered to create the first academic chair in palliative care. This chair will be named after Dr. Gillian Gilchrist. The idea is to ensure that we continue to focus on important areas within palliative care and be able to improve how future patients receive the best end-of-life care possible. According to Dr. Gilchrist, there is a lot that proper palliative care can do for an individual who is at the end of his or her life. It provides patients and loved ones with the necessary support through a difficult time, not just physical support but emotional support as well.

Proper palliative care cannot be done without a team or proper training. This is why we must support this bill to ensure that the proper resources are there for Canadians when we need them. Experts themselves have said that if given the choice of good palliative care or to end one's own life, 95% of patients would choose to live.

As Dr. Richard Reznick, dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Queen's University, said, "We have no desire to treat tomorrow's patients the way we're treating today's. We [must] treat them better."

In conclusion, we must treat those people better. Many of the people requiring palliative care are seniors or veterans. Seniors built our communities, developed our businesses, and supported our economy. Seniors built this great country, fought in our wars, raised their kids, and ultimately created this prosperous country that we are all so fortunate to live in. It is our responsibility to ensure that the most vulnerable are taken care of. When these individuals, who have done so much for us, need the most support, it is Canada's turn to support them. It is our job to make them comfortable. This is why I will support this important bill. I encourage all members of the House to do the same. I want to thank my colleague for all of the good work she has done bringing this issue forward.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for bringing this bill forward, for her leadership on palliative care in Canada, and for making sure that the conversation does not die between parliamentary sittings. I would also like to thank Hospice Wellington for helping me with its insights and input on what I am talking about tonight, and I thank the hospice centres across the country for the amazing work they do for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

This private member's bill aims to establish a national framework for hospice palliative care. My predecessor, Frank Valeriote, co-chaired an all-party parliamentary committee on palliative and compassionate care, along with the members from Kitchener—Conestoga and the former MP from Windsor—Tecumseh. Together the committee took the lead in crafting a report called "Not to be Forgotten", which forms the foundation of Bill C-277.

The hard work demonstrated by this committee cannot be overstated. After a year of travelling, town halls, and consultations, the committee drafted a report that addressed at length the issues facing vulnerable Canadians, such as elder abuse, pain management, and family caregiver support. In speaking to Frank Valeriote about this bill coming back to Parliament, he said that it was one of the best experiences he had while he worked in this place.

This report establishes a clear and comprehensive guideline for the government to establish a national framework that will reinforce the fact that every Canadian life matters. This bill rejects the notion that Canadians who choose hospice palliative care are a burden on their families and on society. In fact, this bill acknowledges that palliative care offers patients time to live with dignity and to share precious time with loved ones.

Canadians deserve the freedom to make this fundamental decision about life and death without fear that their personal choices will be obstructed by politics or government. With 70% of Canadians left without access to adequate palliative care, we have a responsibility to act in the interest of patients and their families. This is why our government supports both access to palliative care and to medical assistance in dying.

End-of-life issues are as diverse as Canadians themselves, meaning that it is our responsibility as a government to provide as many options as possible for Canadians so that they can take these deeply personal choices and make them their own. This means that we must work with the provinces and territories to develop a flexible, integrated model of palliative health care delivery that takes into account Canada's geographic, regional, and cultural diversity, along with a funding strategy for implementation.

As was mentioned earlier, we have to work out how we work with provinces and territories on how we can deliver these services together. This system must be responsive to the needs of patients and create an environment that creates comfort and reassurance.

As discussed in the report, a hierarchy of care environments is an excellent example of how palliative care can adapt to the needs of patients and their caregivers. These environments offer a range of choices, from one to eight.

It is not the quality of care that determines why level 1 is better than level 3. For many people, level 1 or 2 is the best location, since it keeps them at home, where they can receive good physical, emotional, and spiritual support as well as informational care.

Level 7 is a more traditional hospital environment with more involved and expert care, which comes at the expense of a familiar environment for the patient. Patients have described being removed from their preferred surroundings as in itself a kind of dying, because removing what is valued increases the expectation that they will die sooner rather than later.

This system provides an appropriate space for terminally ill patients so that they can have access to the support they need and the dignity they deserve while retaining as much of their home environment as possible.

It is crucial that this palliative care framework provide for the medical, emotional, practical, and spiritual needs of patients. These are the four pillars of hospice palliative care.

Canada has played a proud role in developing modern hospice palliative care. Even the word “palliative” is a Canadian invention, developed in Montreal in the 1970s. Now we must take the final steps needed to make hospice palliative care available to all Canadians.

● (1850)

Many here in this House have heard me speak at length about the importance of innovation, and here too it has a role to play. Innovation can do more than grow our economy. It can also revolutionize how we protect and care for the most vulnerable in our society, including first nations and people who have difficulty getting to care.

A perfect example is the virtual hospice, an online exchange where ordinary people communicate with palliative care professionals to improve care. The virtual hospice uses readily available technologies to help Canadians living in remote areas access the medical professionals they need while remaining in the comfort and security of their own homes and their own communities.

Private Members' Business

Dr. Valerie Schulz, of the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry in London, Ontario, has developed a simple and effective way to get medical students interested in palliative care. Each year, 12 students from the undergraduate program become hospice volunteers. Each student undergoes 30 hours of training and is mentored by an experienced hospice volunteer. The experience is priceless for the future doctors, as it gives them a chance to meet and converse with people outside the clinical environment and without the need to bring a clinical perspective to the relationship. Thankfully, this practice has taken root with great success in hospices across Ontario. It develops the relationships that future doctors will have with their patients facing similar challenges.

Students relate to the hospice clients as persons, learning how they feel about and react to the prospect of dying. Friendships are formed and lessons are learned, which will be of lifelong value to the future doctors. The clients also are transformed, touched that a future doctor cares enough to spend time with them in a companion role. This program is worth emulation and broader application.

In my riding of Guelph, Hospice Wellington has been in existence for over 30 years. Their residential program is noted for being one of the best performing, if not the best, in the province. It serves over 300 individuals and their families. It is my hope that this bill will allow terminally ill patients to receive this kind of care from coast to coast.

I am proud of the work the government and this Parliament have initiated with respect to end-of-life issues. Bill C-277 will provide Canadian patients with a comprehensive system of palliative care as a first option before they consider other options, such as medical assistance in dying.

Additionally, this approach emphasizes the importance of living with dignity before dying with dignity. By creating a national framework for end-of-life treatment, Canada will plug the gap in its medicare program, ensuring that all Canadians, from the very beginning until the very end, have access to the compassionate care they are entitled to under our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for bringing this forward for us. I will be supporting this bill as it comes forward with amendments.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé has two minutes. That is all the time remaining. My apologies.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak even though I have only two minutes.

Obviously, I intend to vote in favour of Bill C-277. I want to congratulate and thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for her bill, which seeks to develop a framework on palliative care in Canada.

Private Members' Business

This bill is very important and all Canadians have been waiting for it for a long time. Many Canadians are suffering because of the lack of clear national standards. There is also a lack of funding for palliative care.

In 2014, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay moved a very important motion calling for the creation of a pan-Canadian strategy for palliative and end-of-life care.

The population in my riding is aging. Approximately 17,800 people are over the age of 65, so people have been waiting for this bill for a long time. However, now we need to walk the talk and take meaningful action. We need to develop a national framework and ensure that there is funding for it. We must be proactive. I consulted my constituents and I know that family caregivers do extraordinary work. I recently lost my grandfather and I was able to see the excellent work that is being done in the area of palliative care, but again we need to support family caregivers.

I want to once again congratulate the member for Sarnia—Lambton. We are really proud of her. We are also pleased to see that the Conservative Party has woken up and seen the importance of providing palliative and end-of-life care in Canada. Congratulations and thank you.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need palliative care services now more than ever. Fewer than 30% of Canadians have access to this vital service that allows them to choose to live as well as they can for as long as they can. Bill C-277 is the next action required to define the services to be covered, to bring standard training requirements to the various levels of care providers, to come with a plan and mechanism to ensure consistent access for all Canadians, and to collect the data to ensure success.

Canada has an ever-growing number of individuals of all ages experiencing chronic and terminal conditions. Good palliative care covers a wide range of services, as we have heard, such as acute care, hospice care, home care, crisis care, and spiritual and psychological counselling. A palliative philosophy of care is needed to address a wide variety of needs through an adapted and patient-centred process.

Use of more home care and hospice care will bring a fourfold reduction in health care costs compared to acute and palliative hospital care. The creation and implementation of a palliative care framework would give Canadians access to consistent, high-quality palliative care through hospitals, home care, long-term care facilities, and residential hospices.

The bill is timely, as we have heard, since the special committee that studied the Carter decision on medically assisted dying said that without good quality palliative care, there really is no true choice, and we want Canadians to have a choice.

I want to thank many organizations. We heard them mentioned before. They are the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, Pallium Canada, ARPA, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, many of the member hospices, Heart & Stroke, the Kidney Foundation, the ALS Society, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, more than 50

organization members of the Coalition for Quality Care, and many faith organizations, including the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

There are so many Canadians who have said that they support this bill, and it is through organizations and groups like these that we can integrate palliative care into the current health care system and make a true difference for Canadians.

I want to thank everyone for their support and for continuing to bring awareness to this. I thank the all-party committee that studied this subject and assisted me in bringing forward this bill with these recommendations. I want to thank colleagues on all sides of the House, who have spoken passionately and in support of this bill, and the thousands of Canadians who have written letters to MPs and the Prime Minister and sent 84 petitions to the House asking for palliative care.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Some hon. members have indicated that they are prepared to support referring this bill to committee for amendment. I have heard the members' input on getting the balance right between what is under provincial jurisdiction and what is under federal jurisdiction.

I know that areas such as education are under provincial jurisdiction. However, with the provinces beginning to roll out services in fragmented ways, the federal government has an opportunity to provide the leadership needed to leverage best practices and to fill the possible gaps, because the work does not end with one plan.

We must develop the infrastructure we need in order to provide palliative care beds and hospice care. With our aging demographic, we are going to have to increase the number of home support workers, personal caregivers, registered psychiatric nurses, palliative care specialists, and those providing support services. The promise that the government made in its 2016 budget to allocate \$3 billion for this is a good start.

[*English*]

I am happy to see this bill go to committee, with the hope that we will find a way to accelerate the process of making this framework a reality. As we begin the new year, we have a chance, as parliamentarians, to come together in a co-operative spirit to do the right thing for Canadians without partisanship.

I urge my colleagues on all sides of the House to support this bill going forward to committee. Give Canadians the palliative care they so desperately need. Let compassion make members' choices, and support Bill C-277.

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.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

Private Members' Business

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

[For continuation of proceedings see part B]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, January 31, 2017
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

EMERGENCY DEBATE

• (1900)

[English]

U.S. DECISION REGARDING TRAVEL BAN

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the United States' decision regarding refugee travel.

[Translation]

Let me remind hon. members that they are not required to be in their own seats and that, pursuant to the order made earlier today, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent.

• (1905)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Outremont.

On Friday, January 27, 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries from the United States for at least the next 90 days. The countries included in this ban are Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. Also included in the executive order are an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees and a four-month ban on the admission of any refugee or refugee claimant.

These edicts have sent disbelief and shock waves throughout the international community. I, for one, can say this: in all of my life, I never thought that I would witness a ban based on race, religion, and place of birth from any democratic country, much less from Canada's closest ally and neighbour.

Since the immigration and travel ban has been made public, I have received hundreds of emails and phone calls from constituents who absolutely reject these racist policies, policies that so clearly violate many international refugee and human rights legal obligations, including the 1951 refugee convention and its 1967 protocol, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the

convention against torture. It is therefore our duty as their elected representatives to respond to these extraordinary events.

How ironic it is that the Trump executive orders were made on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Honestly, have we learned nothing from history? A ban against individuals, based race, religion, or country of birth simply cannot be tolerated.

I rose in this House yesterday to propose this emergency debate, and I would like to acknowledge and thank the Speaker for granting my request. It is my utmost sincere hope that we will have a productive and non-partisan discussion about what action Canada needs to take in light of the Trump administration's immigration and travel ban. Canadians cherish their role as global citizens and are staunch defenders of human rights, both at home and abroad.

Over the weekend, the Prime Minister tweeted: "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength". When Canadians heard these words, we could not help but feel a sense of pride, for they reaffirm our Canadian values. Now it is time for us to give meaning to these words with an action plan. Exceptional situations require exceptional actions. This is one of those moments. Canadians are loud and clear that they want us to step in. The unprecedented outpouring of support, fundraising, and activism on the part of Canada's refugee sponsorship community has not faded.

As a first measure, yesterday I called on the government to immediately remove the 1,000 application cap on privately sponsored refugees. Canadians have overwhelmingly shown their generosity and compassion by stepping up to provide private sponsorship in the Syrian refugee initiative. Instead of stifling this incredible spirit of compassion and kindness, Canada should be facilitating this gesture of hope by lifting the cap on privately sponsored refugees.

Second, in addition to this measure, I am also calling on the government to show leadership with a special measure to fast-track the refugee applications that have already been successfully screened and processed for resettlement in the U.S. or those that are near completion but are now caught in this ban. These individuals are now left in a devastating limbo, and that is simply unacceptable. We all know that women, children, and families who face violence and persecution caught in this ban will be left out in the cold, and Syrian refugees will be refused indefinitely. How can that be?

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●(1910)

To date, the government's response has been to simply say, "Stay the course". We must remember that the current course of action proposed by the government was what was in place before the Trump ban on immigration and travel. If we do not modify our current immigration plan and policies, then we are just bystanders in the face of these intolerable, discriminatory policies.

Sadly, the Prime Minister's words will then ring hollow, rendered as meaningless rhetoric in this important moment in our history. None of us want to see that.

Third, given the severe and serious implication of the ban, Canada must now determine whether or not the American refugee system can be deemed to be providing a safe haven for those who face persecution. A number of organizations, including Amnesty International, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, and the Canadian Council for Refugees, amongst many others, have called on the government to suspend the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement.

The principle behind the Safe Third Country Agreement is that Canada should be able to rely on another country, a safe country that a refugee claimant has travelled through, to provide a fair hearing, an effective protection should it be warranted rather than allowing the individuals to continue to Canada to make a claim. At the heart of this, Canada must be confident that the other countries' record for refugee rights and human rights is both adequate and equivalent to that of Canada.

Given these troubling developments, it is simply not possible to suggest that the U.S. currently reaches these standards. Canada can no longer have confidence that the American refugee system is providing a safe haven for those who face persecution. The New Democrats are therefore calling on the government to immediately suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement.

Finally, the Canadian government must take immediate steps to ensure that Canadians are not impacted by this executive order, and to reassure Canadian dual nationals and Canadian permanent residents that they can travel safely.

Since the signing of the executive order, there has been a troubling amount of confusion and concern as to who is impacted by this ban. The confusion and concern have been expressed not just by Canadian dual nationals but also by the Canada Border Services Agency, as little information has been given about how they would enforce this issue.

During the government's press conference over the weekend, representatives of the CBSA made it clear that they were not being given adequate information as to how to handle this executive order. They stated that they would be watching what the executive order means in terms of details, so until they have that level of understanding, they do not know; they are confident in their current screening system processes.

Despite verbal assurances that the ban did not apply to Canadian dual nationals and those with permanent resident status in Canada travelling with passports from one of the seven countries impacted

by the ban, there are media reports that at least one individual is already being denied entry into the United States.

Dr. Reza, an Alberta biomedical engineer born in Iran and a Canadian permanent resident, was denied entry into the United States on Saturday while travelling with a group of colleagues to a San Francisco biomedical engineering conference. It was reported that he was told that, because he was born in Iran, he could not pass through the airport.

Many members are concerned. There are many issues with respect to this. As the NDP critic for immigration, refugees, and citizenship, I am calling on the government to act. We need to give meaning to the Prime Minister's words and to take action. Canada can do this and Canada must do this.

George Washington once said:

...happily, the government of the United States...gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance....

If the Trump administration will not live up to the wise words of Trump's predecessor, then Canada and the international community must step up and stand united with a clear voice and offer a clear path forward.

●(1915)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate to start off by repeating what the member made reference to. I believe that the government, through the Prime Minister of Canada, has been very clear on the issue, and I will repeat the tweet, the words that were put on the record shortly after:

To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength

This is a message, "Diversity is our strength", that the Prime Minister has been saying ever since I have known him. He is a man of great tolerance and understanding of what real Canadian values are. When called upon, he is a Prime Minister that has come to the plate and has been there for Canadians. I believe that Canadians understand that.

We see through this ministry that the Prime Minister has put together a group of individuals, from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to our Minister of Immigration, to take actions that I believe are in the best interests of Canada as a whole and maintaining the values that Canadians have.

Would the member not agree that the response from the Prime Minister, from actions taken to date by the Government of Canada, is in fact advancing the values that Canadians hold so close to their hearts?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, sadly, the answer is no.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the government, while I think that the sentiments are laudable, we hope to hear some more substantive discussion of the issues than that.

I would ask my colleague from the NDP to elaborate on one aspect that I do not think she touched on, which is the security dimension. I think the executive order actually risks making us less safe, not more safe. I wonder if she agrees with me and if she might reflect on why that is the case.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

From this point of view, when we have division and the politics of fear, it does not breed safety, and that really is what the executive order does.

We in Canada take a different point of view. We want to open our arms, hearts, and minds to those who are fleeing persecution. We want to step up in troubling times with our neighbour making such a discriminatory proclamation. We will work with the international community and we will take our place on the international stage and do our work.

We want the government to consider the proposals that we have put forward. Let us put the words of the Prime Minister into action. That is what this debate is all about.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is regarding the safe third country agreement. How exactly would the NDP go about suspending it?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad the member asked this question, because I did not have time to get into the details.

As it happens, article 10 of the safe third country agreement allows for the simple and immediate suspension of this agreement for up to three months with the possibility of an extension. It states:

Either Party may, upon written notice to the other Party, suspend for a period of up to three months application of this Agreement. Such suspension may be renewed for additional periods of up to three months. Either Party may, with the agreement of the other Party, suspend any part of this Agreement.

That is how we could do it.

My question for the member opposite and the government is this: Will the government commit to the immediate suspension of the Safe Third Country Agreement as written in the agreement itself?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to participate in this emergency debate to address the presidential executive order issued by Donald Trump prohibiting the travel of all refugees and individuals from seven Muslim majority countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Canadians are deeply concerned about President Trump's appalling racist immigration ban.

• (1920)

[Translation]

His fundamentally misguided policies are not just spreading a wave of intolerance around the world. They are also creating devastating implications for thousands of innocent people, travellers, and refugees. The ban will also have a major negative impact on the North American economy.

[English]

This ban against individuals based upon race, religion, or country of birth, implemented by our closest neighbour cannot be tolerated by Canada. We have the obligation to speak out. To be very clear,

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New Democrats unequivocally oppose this ban and condemn it. We denounce this policy, but like many Canadians, we are concerned that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada have not done the same.

[Translation]

The New Democrats requested this emergency debate, and I commend my colleague from Vancouver East for getting it approved. We have also called for a number of practical measures that the government can and must adopt to ensure that Canada does its part, starting with an official statement indicating that Canada does not endorse Donald Trump's Muslim immigration ban. Direct and concrete measures must then be taken to deal with the consequences.

Canada's values of diversity, peace, and inclusion are diametrically opposed to this order and everything it represents.

[English]

In unprecedented times like these, our words must be clear and our actions must be real. The world is watching and lives hang in the balance. We must stand up to those who pedal the politics of fear and division, and Canada must step up and do its part. We support the government's initial move to provide temporary resident permits to those who intended to return to the U.S. but can no longer do so because of the ban, but there is much more that Canada can and must do.

[Translation]

Today the NDP is calling for five specific measures. The first is to lift the 1,000 cap on privately sponsored refugee families, which, as we all know, was reached in a single month. That cap, especially at a time when the United States has banned the entry of Syrian refugees indefinitely, is completely unacceptable and contrary to international laws enacted since the Second World War.

Indeed, Canadian citizens who want to help in some way should be able to do so.

[English]

There are Canadians who have worked with neighbours and raised tens of thousands of dollars and made plans as private sponsors to bring over Syrian refugees, but now because of the government's cap, they had to phone the Syrian families they had promised to bring over to tell them that they could no longer help them, not for lack of resources or lack of willingness to help, but because of an arbitrary, artificial cap of 1,000 applications which the government could remove today if it wanted to. It is unacceptable and it has to change. There are 2,248 innocent Syrian refugees who have been immediately and indefinitely stranded by Trump's ban. We have the capacity to help these people and we must.

[Translation]

Fast-tracking refugee claims is the second point. We must do so for those who had been accepted by the United States before the ban and those who were about to be accepted.

Canada should help those refugees who have been left behind because of the ban and put a system in place that ensures the rapid approval of claimants in Canada's refugee system, because the security requirements are quite similar.

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We also need to work with the international community to address any weaknesses in the refugee resettlement process. Thousands of refugees will no longer be able to find asylum because of Donald Trump's anti-immigration and anti-Muslim order. Canada should work with its international partners and come up with a plan to increase the number of refugees welcomed here until that ban is lifted.

Those are the NDP's initial proposals. These measures could be taken immediately and could provide significant support to everyone affected by President Trump's executive order regarding immigration and travel. We can no longer assume that refugees in the United States will be given a fair process. We must do our part, lift the cap limiting refugees here, and work with the international community to help the many refugees left in the lurch by this ban.

Canada must get guarantees for people travelling to the United States, specifically, that they will be allowed to enter that country without any additional undue prejudice.

• (1925)

[English]

Again, we are urging the government to join us in condemning this ban and to take action to help the thousands of vulnerable people impacted by it. Instead, what have we received from the government? I was shocked today when I looked at the transcript of the new point man, the member of Parliament for Orléans, a former general, someone who has been around for a long time. For him to be seeking to find excuses is, for me, intolerable, especially when we know that he is supposed to represent the best of Canada in dealing with the U.S.

What did he have to say specifically when he was asked about this racist ban on Muslims? He said, "That's up to the United States to—to actually decide for themselves. It's within the legal remit of the president to issue executive orders."

On CBC Radio's *The Current* this morning on whether Canada needs to change its own policies in light of the U.S. policy changes, the member for Orléans said, "An adage of keep calm and carry on, or another one is, you know, ice water in the veins, until such time as clarity is provided, either by us or by interaction with the Americans. I think that's the wisest course." Really? Keep calm and carry on: is that the best the government has to offer?

I listened to the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North as he stood to justify the inaction of the Liberals by reading a tweet by the Prime Minister. Is that our foreign policy? Is that what Canada standing up for human rights on the world stage boils down to in this era with the Liberal government?

We on this side of the House are clear that we are against singling people out because of their religion, banning them because of their religion or their country of origin, edicts being sent out, so-called presidential orders, governing by decree. Like my colleague from Vancouver East who brought this debate forward, I never thought I would see that happen in my lifetime, but I do know what happens when dealing with someone with that type of fascist behaviour if we do not stand up to be counted.

The NDP will stand up to be counted. We are not afraid to call a spade a spade. It is time to say no to Donald Trump, to say yes to human rights, and for the Government of Canada to say no to these racist policies.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and ask him a very simple question.

In his speech, he mentioned that our Prime Minister delivered a pretty good speech on this issue. It was an inclusive speech that made it clear that Canada is a welcoming country.

However, in his speech, he often used words like "if" and "maybe". He took for granted that the American government will do certain things. At this stage, are we not better off remaining positive and inclusive rather than assuming the future will be as bad as he suggests?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I get the feeling the member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation was listening to his colleague from Winnipeg North when he said that I complimented the so-called speech delivered by the Prime Minister on this issue. The Prime Minister did not actually speak to this issue.

When travelling abroad, he has plenty of wonderful things to say about human rights and freedoms. Those rights and freedoms have been guaranteed by the United Nations since the end of the Second World War. Every Canadian prime minister, regardless of political stripe, has had the extraordinary responsibility of representing a country with a long-standing democratic tradition and stating that we will stand up and fight for human rights.

All we got from his Prime Minister was a tweet. I would like to remind my dear colleague that the root word of "Twitter" is "twit". I can assure him that Canadians expect better. Two thousand two hundred—

• (1930)

The Speaker: Order.

I encourage the member to avoid making unparliamentary remarks.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With all due respect, I listened patiently as the leader of the New Democratic Party delivered his speech. At times, members cross the line. I would suggest that the leader of the New Democratic Party has crossed the line. All members are honourable, and I would ask him to withdraw his comments.

The Speaker: I invite the hon. member for Outremont to withdraw the word.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I was answering my colleague. Earlier your colleague said that there would be no points of order, but I would be pleased to respond to both at once.

We are here this evening to debate an issue of utmost importance to the future of human rights around the world.

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When one of the most important democracies adopts an executive order that bans—

The Speaker: Order, please. I invited the hon. member for Outremont to withdraw the word he used.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Of course, Mr. Speaker. Twitter is not my word; it is a trademark. I cannot help it. I withdraw it unreservedly.

The Speaker: Saying that sort of thing is not acceptable.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, leaving that aside, I want to ask the leader of the NDP a different question. Certainly we have spoken out very clearly about the problems with the executive order.

I want to ask him another question about refugees. The House passed a motion with respect to Yazidi refugees. What action does the leader of the NDP think is necessary from the government in light of that motion to address the urgent issue of Yazidi, as well as the Syrian Christian refugees, many of whom are similarly affected by this ban but who also face genocide in their own country?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the question is what we are doing for refugees generally. Whether they are Yazidis, Christian, Muslim, it does not matter. That is the whole point of this debate.

Our American neighbours have just enacted a presidential decree that singles out people on the basis of their religion or their national origin for special treatment. Historically, that has produced tragic results.

The member of Parliament for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation said before that this was all theory. Actually, 2,248 innocent Syrian refugees who have been immediately and indefinitely stranded by Trump's ban is anything but a theory; it is a reality.

That is why, on this side of the House, we asked for this emergency debate. My colleague from Vancouver East obtained that debate, thanks to you, Mr. Speaker. These are rare events, but they are institutionally important because they allow us to shine a light on an issue that cannot be debated otherwise. That is the condition, *sine qua non*, of this type of debate.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your prescience in according this debate. I want to assure Canadians that the New Democratic Party is never going to satisfy itself with vague sentences. We will never use the type of language that has been used. We will call for immediate action and for the Canadian government to finally start standing up to the fascist Donald Trump.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to speak to the recent developments concerning immigration and travel to the United States, and to participate in this emergency debate.

Canada is a welcoming nation. Throughout our history, immigration has played a key role in helping build our strong and prosperous country. Immigration will continue to play that important role to contribute to Canada's well-being, to our economic prosperity, and to our overall success as a country.

Our government is committed to ensuring Canada's economic prosperity as well as to doing our part to help others in seeking refuge. That is why our 2016 immigration levels plan contained the

highest level of projected immigrant admissions put forward in modern times, and our latest plan maintains these historically high levels and will result in Canada welcoming between 280,000 and 320,000 new permanent residents in 2017.

Notably, we have increased the share of economic admissions in our 2017 levels plan as compared with the 2016 plan, which is a reflection of our commitment to the idea that immigration is a key ingredient to our economic success. For this is true. As much as immigrants need Canada, Canada also needs immigrants.

The Prime Minister has made it very clear that Canada will continue to be a place of refuge and protection to those who are fleeing persecution and war in the world. We applaud Canadians and we thank them so much for their generosity in welcoming 46,000 refugees in the year 2016. This is not just a reflection on our government's leadership on this file. It is a true testament to the ability of Canadians to open their hearts and their doors to our new Canadian family members.

The government recognizes that Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada are rightly concerned about the implications of the recent American President's executive order.

I wish to take this opportunity to assure the House, and indeed all Canadians and permanent residents, that our government takes this matter very seriously. We recognize that this decision could impact many Canadians and permanent residents. We will continue our dialogue with our American counterparts over the coming days to minimize any negative impact.

As members are aware, the President's executive order that was signed on January 27 has banned nationals from seven countries from entering the United States for at least 90 days. These countries are Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen.

The American administration has assured us that Canadian dual nationals travelling on a Canadian passport are not affected by this executive order. In addition to that, we were also informed by the White House that Canadian permanent residents with a valid Canadian permanent resident card would continue to have access to the United States as before. We will continue to engage with our

U.S. government counterparts during this ongoing implementation of their executive order to ensure that Canadians and permanent residents are provided with updated information as it becomes available.

As I announced Sunday, I assure those who may be stranded in Canada as a result of the U.S. travel restrictions that I will use my power as the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to provide temporary residency to anyone stranded in Canada as a result of these measures. As such, I have signed today a public policy that will allow me to exercise my ministerial authority to grant temporary resident visa extensions. This means that individuals currently visiting Canada with a valid Canadian visitor visa on their passports but who cannot return to the United States will be able to extend their stay in Canada as needed.

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We know Global Affairs Canada has not received any requests for consular assistance to date, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is keenly monitoring these events, as is the Minister of Public Safety. However, my department was made aware that a small number of passengers aboard Canadian flights had been denied boarding, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely with the Minister of Transport and his department who are in daily contact with airlines on these matters.

● (1935)

To reiterate, we were advised by United States authorities that Canadian citizens with dual citizenship from one of the seven countries were not affected by the executive order. This means that the regular travel procedures to the United States should continue to apply for these individuals.

Once again, the government strongly encourages dual nationals to travel with their Canadian passports.

Officials through our embassy in Washington continue to work with their American counterparts to clarify the details of the executive order and its impacts.

The Government of Canada will continue to provide information to the public once it is available so Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and visitors to our country who plan to visit the United States are kept up to date on travel requirements.

I will also note that there was a Reuters report yesterday evening that the U.S. government had granted waivers to let 872 refugees, due to arrive shortly, into their country since the executive order was issued. While we are seeking further information on this matter, it does suggest that the situation continues to evolve and we will continue to assess the impacts of that.

Within the framework of this debate, I would also like to say a few words about Canada's approach to immigration and to refugees.

As the Prime Minister has frequently said, we are strong because of our diversity, not in spite of it. We have a long, proud, and strong tradition of welcoming newcomers and those who seek protection in our land. We have an openness and a positive attitude to allow new citizens to make lasting contributions to Canadian society.

Like many in our country, I can speak about this Canadian tradition in a personal way. I am someone who originally came to Canada as a teenager and as a refugee. I can trace all of the opportunities I have had in this country and throughout my life to the fortunate arrival I had in Canada. I know from my own personal experience that Canadians from many walks of life continue to play a critical role in the successful integration and settlement of newcomers to our country. This is an effort that is beyond government, that is within the broader community, and I owe a great deal of the success I have had to this integral part of my experience.

I cannot emphasize enough how critical it is at the community level to foster integration and inclusion for newcomers. It is incumbent on communities to take that leadership role and our government will continue to support that process. I have witnessed first hand this welcoming spirit that is common within many Canadian communities both small and large.

In contrast with the populations of many other countries, Canadians by and large believe that our openness, our welcoming attitude to those in need and those in search of a better life make our own country better and stronger.

We saw this attitude most recently during our great national project to resettle Syrian refugees in Canada, a project that was embraced with enthusiasm by Canadians in both large urban centres and small rural communities throughout Canada.

My predecessor, as minister of immigration, refugees and citizenship, frequently noted that he was the only immigration minister in the world who faced the challenge of trying to welcome enough refugees quickly enough to satisfy the remarkable generosity of Canadians who wanted to sponsor them.

It is a legacy I am pleased to inherit. I believe this reflects well on our country and is one of the reasons why people all over the world look admiringly at Canada and seek to build a new life in our great country. It also creates something of a "virtuous circle" that brings great benefits to the country.

Indeed, just as the broader Canadian community supports, sustains, and helps to integrate newcomers, we can appreciate that newcomers to Canada have historically returned the favour, as they and their descendants have become productive and influential Canadians.

We have all heard the words of thanks from our recently resettled Syrian refugees and the gratefulness they have expressed toward the country and the people that have brought them to a better and safer life.

We are seeing every day examples of how they are making the effort to make their new communities and their new country a better place.

A wonderful example of this is Ms. Rita Khanchat from Calgary. Last year she left Syria during the civil war, coming to Canada to start a new life.

● (1940)

When the wildfires broke out in Fort McMurray, she mobilized the Calgary Syrian refugee community to donate whatever they could to support the families displaced by the wildfires. Ms. Khanchat Kallas recently received the 2016 People's Choice Peace and Human Rights Award for her great accomplishments and her compassion and humanitarianism.

Newcomers and their descendants have made immeasurable contributions to the economic, cultural, and social development of our country.

When our Prime Minister spoke at the United Nations last September about Canada's project to resettle Syrian refugees, he told the world about the Hadhad family of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, who opened the now renowned Peace by Chocolate factory within a few months of arriving in Canada. The Hadhad family, who have quickly gone from refugees to employers, are just the latest example of the great contributions newcomers make to Canada, their new home.

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Communities across the country have greatly benefited from immigrants' new ideas, unique skills, investments, and entrepreneurial spirit. The Government of Canada recognizes this. That is why we want to ensure that immigrants with skills and experience are attracted to Canada and can integrate and contribute to our economy as quickly as possible. That is why we work very hard to develop innovative policies and programs that drive economic growth, foster diversity and inclusion, fuel investment, and attract and retain global talent. It is why a key part of that work is cultivating a fast and flexible economic immigration system that can meet Canada's economic and labour market needs by bringing in a diverse range of people, professionals, skilled workers, and former international students. It is why we always try to introduce innovative new thinking into our immigration system, such as our start-up visa program targeting immigrant entrepreneurs who can build innovative companies that can create jobs for Canadians and compete on a global scale.

A few days ago, I was in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, to help launch the innovative and employer-driven Atlantic immigration pilot program. This pilot program aims to attract and retain skilled immigrants to meet the demographic and labour market challenges faced by Atlantic Canada.

These initiatives that we undertake in my department are all premised on the idea that immigration brings great benefits to Canada, and we must do everything we can to maximize those benefits, be they economic, social, or cultural.

Some of our initiatives are in the area of temporary immigration, initiatives that enable us to welcome workers, visitors, and international students to Canada in ways that benefit our country and economy. For example, we recently introduced a global skills strategy to help attract the best minds from other countries. One element of this strategy, which is overseen by my department, will get highly skilled workers here faster by processing their work permits and visas in only two weeks. As well, we are removing the requirement of a work permit for foreign nationals coming to Canada to work for a very short duration. We are also launching a dedicated service channel for foreign companies making significant job-creating investments in Canada.

Another great example of our welcoming attitude in the area of temporary immigration is Canada's international student program, which is geared toward making Canada attractive to students who might otherwise choose to study elsewhere. Apart from the tremendous cultural and social benefits international students bring to this country, they contribute at least \$11.3 billion to our gross domestic product. No doubt, there is global competition for international students, and we must do more to attract and retain these amazing individuals.

We have demonstrated that we are confident in our immigration system. The Government of Canada will continue to ensure that our immigration system is about compassion and economic opportunity while we protect the health, safety, and security of Canadians. We have demonstrated these principles repeatedly in the actions we have taken in our immigration policies. We have doubled the number of resettled refugees in 2017 compared to the levels in 2015 and earlier. We have tripled the number of privately-sponsored refugees compared to the previous government's target.

We have a plan in place to address the backlog of applications, which skyrocketed under the previous government, with an aim to bring down the processing times for refugees from all over the world.

• (1945)

We cannot forget that immigration is also about family reunification. Over the last year, we have made significant changes to reunite families, with announcements for spouses, parents, and grandparents.

We continue to focus efforts to bring in the best, brightest, skilled, and talented from around the world to contribute to Canada's economy.

As Canadians, we believe we have a responsibility to those who are displaced, persecuted, and most in need of protection. As such, Canada will continue to welcome those fleeing persecution and war.

We will continue to engage with our international partners, including the UNHCR, and to share with these partners our experiences, our lessons learned, and our overall approach to the challenges of refugee resettlement. For example, in December, Canada hosted the launch of the global refugee sponsorship initiative, which aims, in part, to offer up, as an example to other countries, our unique Canadian approach to refugee resettlement, in particular our private sponsorship of refugees program.

As a Canadian, I am very proud of our country's long history as a welcoming nation to immigrants and refugees.

Again, I would like to assure Canadians and members of this House that our government is engaged with the U.S. administration, and we will work with them to ensure that Canadian citizens and Canadian permanent residents receive updated information and that Canada will assist those who are stranded in Canada en route to the U.S.

Canada is a country that has always opened its doors and hearts to new immigrants and refugees. We will carry on this proud tradition.

• (1950)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the minister for his speech. There is one thing I would like to thank the minister for, and that is the quick response to those people who were stranded. That is one thing I do agree with.

I dealt with citizenship and immigration for 11 years as an assistant. There are so many things I am looking at. Within my own community and throughout Canada, we have seen many failed policies. We can talk about the Yazidi girls that our critic, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, brought up. We can talk about that. I have seen great failure there.

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This speech was very much one of platitudes. One of the most important things is that we are supposed to be debating something, and I have not heard a response. One thing many of my constituents want to know about is the safe third country agreement. I did not hear you talk about that at all. I just want to know what your values are and where you stand on that.

When we are talking about policies, we are talking about very high-level policies here. That is great. You can talk about everything you have done. We have not seen it actually in—

The Speaker: Order. I have to remind the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, and I think she knows, that when she says “you” in this House, she is referring to the Speaker. Of course, we direct our comments to the Speaker here, so we do not say “you” except in that case. I know the member knows that and that she will watch that in the future.

The hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have received that question, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about two things the hon. member brought up.

On the issue of vulnerable survivors of Daesh, we are working very hard to meet that commitment. I am very proud that all the members of this House supported the resettling of survivors of Daesh in Canada. Our operation is already under way. We are working with partners on the ground. Northern Iraq is a very volatile location. The security situation changes almost daily.

We are working with local partners as well as with the regional authorities in northern Iraq to make sure that we get this right. Our operation is already under way and has been under way for a long time. I want to assure the hon. member that the operation will continue as we meet that commitment.

On the issue of privately sponsored refugees, I just want to say that we have tripled the numbers that were in place under the previous government.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the minister for his appointment. I am looking forward to working with him on the issues he has raised.

Tonight's debate is about the ban that has been brought forward by the Trump administration. This is an emergency debate. This is a discriminatory ban that is targeting people based on their race, based on their religion, and based on their place of birth. To that end, I have received many letters and phone calls on this. I know the minister has as well. In an open letter from over 200 Canadian law professors, they wrote:

We condemn these actions and statements in the strongest possible terms. They reflect the very bigotry, xenophobia and nativist fear-mongering that the international refugee regime was designed to counteract. We also note that they are inconsistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention Against Torture, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and many other international human rights instruments.

Can the minister explain why he disagrees with this assessment and refuses to take the simple step of using article 10 of the agreement to immediately suspend it?

● (1955)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, the responsible thing for our government to do once the executive order came out was to engage with our American counterparts and seek clarification on the implications of the executive order. We have received assurances from the White House and other U.S. authorities that Canadian citizens, Canadian dual citizens, and permanent residents with valid permanent resident cards continue to have access to the United States and are not affected by this executive order.

In terms of the safe third country agreement, the conditions of that agreement continue to be met.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too want to congratulate the minister on his appointment.

As a Conservative, I do not have any problem saying that I think this executive order is imprudent and unjust. Does the minister agree with me about that?

While we are talking about human rights issues, I want to give the minister an opportunity to comment on a human rights situation that I know he is aware of, which is the persecution of the Rohingya in Burma. The situation has become worse. It is a devastating situation. I wonder if the minister could take this opportunity to comment on what the government is doing about that situation.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked an important question, and it gives me a chance to reiterate our commitment to refugees to provide protection to those who seek refuge in our country. We are open to new ideas. We are open to people. We are open to newcomers. Our refugee system has been widely acknowledged as being one of the most generous and compassionate in the world. All refugee claims are heard by the Immigration and Refugee Board, and they are heard on their own merits. We have one of the most generous and compassionate refugee systems in the world.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I surfed my rules of procedure thinking there might be a point of order I could raise, but I could not find an order dealing with my request.

Outside in the cold, I have never seen anything like it. There are people lined up to get into this place. The public galleries are full. I have never seen an emergency debate at night draw crowds. Those people are very cold, and I would ask the minister if he would join me in asking that whatever procedural steps need to be taken are taken to ensure that the people waiting outside get in for this debate. Canadians' consciences have been struck deeply by the appalling executive order of the Trump administration, and Canadians outside in the cold would like to be in here watching parliamentarians debate.

The Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I would echo the member's sentiments. When the public shows up to the House of Commons and we are in session, if measures could be taken to open the doors and fill the public galleries with those who wish to witness debate, all of us, as representatives of those constituents and Canadians, would have no problem holding this debate in front of as many of them as possible.

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The Speaker: Is the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London rising on the same point of order?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely support what both members have said. When the galleries are empty on three sides, we should allow all of the public to come in for this important debate.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, there have been discussions with security staff regarding allowing people to enter and sit in the galleries. I see one gallery that is totally empty, when there are 90 people outside. Everyone here agrees that we should let them in. Let us wait for them.

[English]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising this and other members who have contributed their thoughts on this. I was advised recently that 40 more members of the public will be coming in shortly, but I will certainly communicate to officials the desire of the House, which appears to be that more should be allowed in to fill the galleries.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Fredericton.

● (2000)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to thank my hon. colleague, the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, for his speech this evening and the words he delivered to reassure Canadians that he and his officials are working hard, alongside the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to keep Canadians abreast of the situation as it changes.

I wonder if in the short period of time he would have to reply he could speak to Canadians and let them know the steps he has taken and that he continues to take to ensure that proper information is disseminated to Canadians right across this country.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, from the moment this executive order was issued, I and other governmental colleagues have been continually engaged with our American counterparts. We have received assurances. We have continued to monitor the situation.

I have used my ministerial authority to make sure that folks who are stranded in Canada and have a valid Canadian visa, but who cannot now enter the United States, will have temporary residency through ministerial authority.

I will continue to monitor the situation. I am also working very closely with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Transport, and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to ensure that Canadians are up to speed and are informed and updated as quickly as possible.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians I was appalled by Sunday's attack on Muslim worshippers in Quebec City, and I hope we are soon able to move beyond expressions of solidarity against hate crimes, important though those expressions are, to concrete action.

Having heard the minister's examples tonight, I think the government could surely start by lifting that ceiling of 1,000 on private sponsorships for Syrian refugees.

This immigration and travel ban might as well have painted a target on the backs of all Muslims around the world, but while many are at risk, perhaps the most at risk are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender citizens of the seven countries banned. In all seven, homosexuality is illegal. While only three explicitly have the death penalty, in all seven, death sentences are carried out by militias under sharia law, and sometimes also by families as so-called honour killings.

Last year, when announcing its Syrian refugee program, the Liberal government said LGBT refugees are among the most at risk and they would be a high priority for Canada, yet no concrete actions of any kind were taken.

My question tonight is this. Will the government now take specific actions to facilitate asylum for LGBT citizens of the seven countries who are now excluded from the United States and who risk death if sent home?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify one thing that the hon. member has stated, which is that there is a cap, a limit on Syrian and Iraqi refugees, of 1,000 persons. In fact, that is not accurate. That is only one stream within the group of five sponsorships. There are many other streams that are available for Canadians to sponsor Iraqi, Syrian, and many other refugees, including the sponsorship agreement holders.

We are open to reviewing the situation, to make sure that we always have room for improvement, but our privately sponsored refugee numbers are triple what the previous government allocated in its immigration levels plan, and we are proud of that record.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have noticed that Beethoven's seventh symphony, the second movement, makes sense to even the most untrained ear. It juxtaposes restraint with passion in its cadence. It is both regimented and whimsical. It is patient and aggressive. It is elegant and it is rough. It is beauty, it is art, and it is the perfect balance. It is everything that we are capable of.

We wrote *Anna Karenina*, we have put men on the moon, we have discovered antibiotics, and we found the Higgs boson. We are beauty and we are art. Yet, we repeat the well-documented failures of our past.

As I stood at the Temple Mount last year, what was first and foremost on my mind was not God's peace but how many lives had been sacrificed over the history of our species in the name of tribalism, religion, and hate. As I stood on the Syrian border, and then looked into the haunted eyes of Nadia Murad while she described her week to me, my western naïveté that those who kill in the name of religion can be reasoned with or appeased was violently stripped from me.

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Here we are today, in the legislative chamber of one of the world's most wealthy, most democratic, most capitalist countries; two generations removed from open global conflict; many more generations removed from sustained open conflict within our own borders; many innovations, works of art, and billions of dollars of created wealth later; and we find ourselves debating us versus them.

It is facile for us to believe that there are not others on this planet who disagree with our way of life. There are those who hold views so extreme that they kill in the name of their God. They rape in the name of their God. They subjugate and bring terror in the name of their God. No religion and no nation is immune to this. These people live within our borders and without. They are Muslim and they are Christian. They are Sikh and they are Hindu.

Yet there are those who seek to bring light and beauty to the world. They seek to bring peace, prosperity, and tolerance. Every religion and every nation has these people. They are Muslim and they are Christian. They are Sikh and they are Hindu.

Good, courage, innovation, creativity, tolerance, love, light, and hope know no boundaries; nor do evil, hate, subjugation, intolerance, decadence, and violence.

What are we to do, we who value equality of opportunity; we who have created art and beauty, Ebola vaccines, and nanotechnology; we who value hope and the greater good; we who value knowledge; we who value love; we as Canadians?

My entreaty to my colleagues tonight is this: that we reject facile arguments designed to sell products and people, and in doing so, value logic and compassion as we set about our legislative responsibilities in the matter of immigration policy to Canada.

I am fairly sure nobody in this place is going to be pleased with me for this speech tonight.

To respond to the immigration policies of other nations, we must first get our own house in order, and then through those actions show the world what immigration policy best practice looks like. If we are to have any influence on international immigration policy, we must refute through action the emerging international norm of immigration debate becoming firmly entrenched in two polarized positions.

The first school of thought believes that there should be little debate around how many humanitarian immigrants we should receive in light of one of the world's more severe migrant crises in recent history. If this belief is questioned, allegations of racism are frequently levelled.

The second camp believes that we should slam the doors shut, that they are stealing our jobs and costing us too much in government programming, that they are all terrorists, and that they are different from us, and to think otherwise means one is a bleeding heart socialist.

Both of these positions are puerile.

To those who subscribe to the first school of thought, Canadians openly accept immigration to our country with two caveats, the first being that our immigration system is sound. Canadians expect our system of checks and balances to be rigorous and to ensure that those who would harm our country or try to enter it under false pretense

are not allowed entrance. In this, the Liberal government's decision to lift our visa restriction on Mexico without the completion of a formal review that ensures proper processes are in place to prevent high levels of bogus refugee claims was poor policy.

Questioning if our immigration processes are adequately functional does not make someone a racist, nor does it mean that we do not want a positive relationship with a country such as Mexico. It reflects the fact that, prior to the visa restriction being imposed, Canada saw thousands of false refugee claims from this country and had security concerns regarding Mexican nationals seeking entrance to Canada.

● (2005)

A formal review would ask for our immigration officials to work with their Mexican counterparts to put processes in place to stop this from happening. It is a positive process, but it takes time. Instead, this government bowed to pressure from various industrial lobbies and lifted the visa. It claimed that increases in Mexican tourism to Canada and trade restrictions that Mexicans would lift in return would outweigh the cost of processing and deporting thousands of false refugee claimants.

Indeed, a notice from immigration officials in the *Canada Gazette* in late 2016 shows that, even after these anticipated economic benefits, the cost to the Canadian taxpayers for this decision would be upward of a quarter of a billion dollars. This does not instill confidence in our immigration system.

Similarly, when the Liberal government mused about performing security and health vetting on 25,000 Syrian refugees after they arrived in Canada as opposed to before, we voiced opposition. This is because deporting people after they have claimed refugee status in Canada is a difficult and costly process. This decision would have been unsafe and it eroded public confidence in our immigration system. As it stood, even so, this process was reviewed by an American Senate committee. Questioning security screening processes is not racist, and it does not mean Canada does not want to help. It is a sign of prudence and respect for Canadians.

The second caveat for Canadians to accept immigration is that they expect new immigrants to Canada to embrace our pluralism and integrate into our economic and social fabric. This means ensuring there is adequate government programming for refugees to learn skills, like being able to speak one of our official languages, so they do not become isolated and are able to obtain employment. These services cost money and take time to establish, so the government has a responsibility to be transparent to Canadians about these costs and to accordingly set out immigration levels.

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This is why the government is required to table a report to Parliament every year that outlines the number of immigrants it wants to bring in under both the humanitarian and economic classes. The Liberal government changed the ratio of economic to humanitarian refugees from roughly 70:30 to 50:50. It is not racist of me, after hearing from out-of-work people in my constituency, as well as recent refugees who cannot access language training programs, to ask how the government is going to pay for dramatically increased levels of integration programming support.

The Liberal government has provided exactly zero public plans on how it plans to help 25,000 Syrian refugees integrate into our economy. Many of these refugees have not found employment. There is no budget for social assistance payments for those who find themselves unemployed after their one-year public transition funding runs out. There have been no increased payments to school boards to deal with the special needs of many of these refugee students. Refugees are relying on food banks. Why is this?

Asking these questions does not mean that Canada is not compassionate. It is exactly the opposite. Transparent plans and budgets for these issues are what give refugees the tools to be successful in Canada and in turn give social licence for allowing in more refugees in the future. The Liberals, in their hurry to fill a quota, have failed in much of this.

Also, we should question how we prioritize refugees and whether we should do that based on vulnerability. Canada cannot sustain an unlimited number of refugees, so we have to set caps and prioritize who we let in. It is not racist to acknowledge that people are refugees because of religious persecution, and while refugee situations imply that entire populations are at risk, there are subsets that are more vulnerable than others. This is why the Liberal government and the United Nations have abjectly failed refugees from persecuted minority groups in Syria and Iraq, many of whom are genocide victims. Yazidis, Christians, minority Muslim groups, and LGBTI have all suffered atrocities at the hands of extremists from the religious majority in the region. Indeed, the entire population in the region is at risk and is suffering. However, the fact remains that there are groups that cannot exist in refugee camps because they will be killed because of their religious beliefs.

Late last year, two senior UNHCR officials sat in my office and told me that one of the reasons that, out of 25,000 refugees, zero Yazidis had been referred to Canada was that because of the time constraints placed on them by the Liberal government it was easier to simply pull numbers from the religious majority located in refugee camps rather than to actively search out genocide victims.

Moreover, the Liberal Party used a game of one-upmanship in the last campaign, in terms of numbers of how many Syrian refugees would come into the country, to whip up whispered claims of racism on the part of our party. The quiet argument was made that we hate Muslim refugees because our immigration minister asked for an audit of how many persecuted ethnic and religious minority groups had been referred to Canada as government sponsored refugees by the United Nations.

● (2010)

While we did this, thousands of Yazidi women were being raped dozens of times a day by dozens of men all in the name of God.

While we did this, genocide was occurring. While we did this, we forgot compassion in the name of bureaucratic simplicity and political gain. For shame on all of us.

We are all to be shamed because this brings me to the second polarized school of thought. As much as religion should not be excluded from the criteria for prioritization of refugees, if we are the enlightened society we purport to be, we should not preclude someone from entering our country solely on the grounds of his or her religious belief or country of origin. For eons we have been killing each other based on religion. In Canada, our pluralism is sustained by laws which separate church and state and harshly punish murder, rape, hate speech, and other actions which are often carried out in the name of one god or another.

I am a Christian. My closest friends are Jewish, Sikh, and Muslim. We talk about the fact that there are extremists in all of our faiths, for example, those who believe in creating inequality for and persecuting LGBT and women. In Canada, our freedom of religion allows us to believe whatever we want, but it does not afford us the right to act on those beliefs if they are criminal. Therefore, in that, completely shutting our doors to new immigrants is wrong.

Should we have an open and transparent debate about how many newcomers we welcome to Canada and under what circumstances they enter? Yes. Should we ensure that we are transparent in the costing and availability of integration programming in the context of the strength of our economy? Yes. Should we ensure that our security screening processes for entering Canada are vigorous and strong? Yes. Should we vigorously enforce our laws to ensure that crimes committed in the name of religion are harshly punished? Yes.

Should we ask why the Liberal government has shifted the responsibility from the privately sponsored refugee program solely onto the taxpayer-sponsored program this year and demand them to change that decision? Yes. Will shutting the doors to immigrants ensure that all religious hate crime in Canada stops and that all Canadians suddenly have jobs overnight? No.

The date on my grandmother's record of passage from Slovakia is May 1938. She found safe haven in Canada as a migrant during one of modern history's largest migrant crises. This is top of mind as I speak in this House today, two short generations later, as Canada's official opposition shadow minister for immigration.

Some of our greatest shames in our nation's history occurred when we failed to show compassion to those in need. The MS *St. Louis* and the *Komagata Maru* come to mind. Canada is a nation filled with those who have been persecuted and have worked to build a country that is a beacon of light in the capacity of humanity to do what is good, just, and beautiful. Completely shutting our doors to people based on their religion is the antithesis of this.

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Many owners of job-creating companies, investors, innovators, and artists are newcomers to Canada. Closing our doors to those people with the thought that it will lower unemployment levels is a fallacy.

During the last election campaign, my party announced a policy that would create a tip line to report “barbaric cultural practices”. If we were truly concerned about the rights of women in the situations that this tip line was purportedly designed to prevent, then why did we present it wrapped in an us-versus-them message? Why would we cave to the allure of the same dog whistle politics that everyone else was and in doing so make things worse for the isolated, and inflaming and normalizing allegations of racism?

Today, there are those who purport to share my party affiliation that blur the discussion of fair criticism of the integration of our immigration system by politicizing a mass murder at a mosque and presenting undefined policy that could be interpreted that entry into Canada is dependent upon one's willingness to take a bite of a ham sandwich. Is this better than the Prime Minister's tweet stating that Canada is open to refugees, after steadfastly refusing to protect victims of genocide through military intervention or, at a minimum, prioritizing the resettlement of genocide victims? No. We are all complicit.

Reading and watching the western world's response to the atrocities that have occurred in Syria have confirmed serious broad systemic failures that make me question if “never again” is really anything more than a platitude. Do we actually have the capacity to respond to the breakdown of humanity and under what circumstances do we care if it does?

On this front, contemporary students of history often “tsk tsk” when confronted with times when the ruling class became grossly disconnected with the proletariat. Broadly speaking, modern westerners are smug that this let-them-eat-cake style decadence could not befall us. Yet our system of capitalism and democratic institutions have given way to global prosperity and sustained peace. Two generations removed from global conflict, this is today's foolish immutable certainty.

● (2015)

After this year, I wonder if this has grown into an entitlement.

With increasing frequency, we let our values become someone else's problem, if we care at all. Nobody wants to do that job? No worries, there is a temporary foreign worker for that. Want to shut down extractive industries in Canada but enjoy the same quality of opportunity? Those with dirty jobs can just transition into something else. In the meantime, the government will borrow and spend to keep us afloat and we can depend on it instead of ourselves. After all, it is cheap to borrow money right now, is it not? Besides, we can always cut military spending because peace comes without cost and war does not happen to us.

There has been perhaps no greater indictment of the rise of western decadence than our response to the Syrian conflict. Between trying to appease unappeasable foes, the woeful response to the migrant crisis—racist versus socialist instead of searching for pragmatism—and explaining away the issue as a quagmire that we should not get involved in or that we were the ones that caused the

problem, so let us just stay out of it and hope that fixes it, in the last five years, hundreds of thousands of humans have been slaughtered and displaced. Women's rights, minority rights, and human rights in general have been violated. Genocide has occurred. It has also become taboo to question the efficacy of the institutions that we have put in place to prevent these things.

The UN has been toothless in its approach to many things, but its failure to Syrians and the Yazidi genocide victims should light the world on fire in terms of its desire to see its functionality changed. Instead, its actors are fiddling with the politics of who gets a seat on the Security Council while Aleppo burns.

With great irony, this has all happened while we have become globally interconnected. Aleppo is no longer somewhere else; it is live on our Twitter feed. Yet, we treat these images, videos of slaughter of our fellow humans, as akin to some sort of third player video game, that is, if we bother to consider them at all.

The reality is that the west does not have the luxury of assuming that the crisis in Syria does not affect us. It has shown us, and those who do not share the institutions of democracy and free markets that sustain our peace, that we have forgotten that power is taken, not given.

Across governments and political flavour, we now believe that we are entitled to our peace. We also believe that our western brand of blind ideological extremism can solve problems when it has mostly gridlocked us into an echo chamber. This translates into foreign policy that has a key objective of being unobjectionable and utilizes the assumption that religious extremists and rogue despots can be bought or appeased into submission.

Moreover, it has shown the world that we cannot be bothered when humanity and civilization completely disintegrate, because hey, it is not happening to us.

If we do not find a way to challenge the status quo of polarized political dogma, our selective antipathy to the human condition and the abject failure of our western political institutions to prevent atrocities, future generations will likely be “tsk tsking” us, too. That assumes that in our selfish decadence we have left them any sort of society that has the capacity to do so.

Each of us needs to be ashamed of how our political motivations, our selfishness, our decadence, and our political gamesmanship has led us to this place of polarized debate that we are today.

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Our only redemption can be found in an ask for forgiveness and an understanding that global peace comes with a cost that is not just borne by our military. As much as we may seek to fling our doors wide open to refugees, we cannot ignore the threat of those who seek to destroy our way of life, and we cannot turn a blind eye when it comes to protecting those in regions who share our ideals from annihilation. This comes with initiatives that create global economic prosperity and sustainability, the costs of which are borne by those of us who find ourselves with the fortune of living in countries of great pluralism.

How can Canada be a leader in pluralism policy best practice? Let us ensure that the debate within our own nation pulls beyond two unproductive polarized fallacies, protects the safety of Canadians, grows our economy, and shows the compassion of our people. Let us support free trade and support those who support the rights of the marginalized and refugees around the world.

If we cannot do better and we only seek to politicize situations of great gravity, then we are doomed to repeat the sins of our past.

In closing, I hope that none of us here will resign ourselves to be complicit. Instead, let us find guidance in our capacity to create beauty and art. In doing so, we advance our cause forward because of our humanity, not because of our political stripe.

• (2020)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think most members here this evening would share in some of the noble ideals the member has projected through the words she put forward tonight in her thoughtful speech. She has used some powerful language around polarized ideals, polarized fallacies, polarized political dogma, political gamesmanship, whisper campaigns, and so on and so forth, with a slight revision in history in terms of some of the facts as she has presented them regarding what our government is or is not doing in terms of changing our immigration system.

However, I do want to ask the member a pointed question and I want to do it in a non-partisan way. It is an opportunity for her to answer a question which many Canadians are asking themselves today about her own party.

I want to come back to the tip line which she mentioned, which many Canadians described not as a tip line but as a snitch line. She projected it and put it forward this evening as some kind of protective mechanism for women. I would like to give the member a chance to explain what that means. I would also like her to explain what her party's position is as it permits the debate which is taking place in her party's leadership campaign, led by the member of Parliament for Simcoe—Grey, who would like to impose a values test on immigrants who are seeking to enter our country.

• (2025)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member opposite listened to a word I said, but I will say this. The country is watching this debate tonight and asking us how we are to respond to the executive order in the United States, and my entreaty is this. Rather than sending out tweets saying “welcome, refugees” in 140 characters, let us actually welcome some Yazidi genocide victim survivors.

As many of my colleagues in this place have asked for tonight, let us lift the cap on privately sponsored refugee families. There are 45,000 applications in the queue. Let us unleash the generosity of Canadians, and not just shift the responsibility of this to Canadian taxpayers. Let us make sure that when we are welcoming refugees to Canada the metrics the government is using are not just numbers, but it is saying how many people have found jobs, how many women have come here with children are isolated in their homes and have not learned one of Canada's languages. These are the sorts of things the government has completely let go in its rhetoric over the last 18 months.

The point I was trying to make tonight is that there is not a single one of us who is not complicit in the rise of rhetoric around the immigration debate in the last 18 months, from colleagues in the European Union, the rise of nationalist parties, Brexit, what has happened in the United States. We are not making sense on this debate.

The question my colleague asked tonight was the complete opposite of what I was trying to do in my speech. I do not understand why we cannot just focus on how we are delivering services and policies instead of trying to use immigration policy and human lives to sell political rhetoric.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that tonight we are gathering in very dark times in the U.S., but given the recent tragedy where Muslim Canadians were killed here in our own country, it speaks of that same darkness here at home. However, in that darkness, and certainly we see it here tonight, there is hope.

I want to put on the record that this hope is in the galleries where so many people, many of whom are young, are here to stand up and demand better from their government. I say that because I know some of the people in that gallery. They are people who want a government that is going to denounce the racist policies of Donald Trump. They are also people who stand up for the rights of refugees and immigrants and who demand more from their government. I want to register that I am very proud of my generation and the people who are here tonight and those who are watching online and on TV who are saying, “No, we are not just going to sit by. We are going to be active. We are going to be active on the streets, in rallies, in vigils. We are going to be out there, and we are demanding better from our government.”

Does my colleague agree that many Canadians, including many young Canadians, are expecting not just some nice-sounding words in a tweet, but are demanding action that truly supports refugees and immigrants, that truly stands up against discrimination and Islamophobia? Essentially, it is a message that Canadians are demanding that their government truly stand up for them.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, actions always speak louder than words and we are measured by our actions. Tonight, I hope what members of the government party might leave with, what members of the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship who are sitting in the lobby tonight might leave with, what the immigration minister might leave with, is the fact that the next time the Prime Minister feels compelled to tweet about American policy decisions, he should first look inwardly and ensure that we have our own house in order.

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There are several pieces of policy that can show the world from a non-partisan perspective what Canada means in terms of welcoming refugees, ensuring that genocide survivors have a home here in a short period of time per the dictates of a unanimously passed motion in this place, ensuring that refugees who are in this country and who are government sponsored, have the programs and services that they need to integrate in this Canadian economy and our social fabric in a short period of time, in a plan that is transparently costed and presented to the Canadian public so that there can be social licencing and through programs such as the privately sponsored refugee program. I have no idea why the government put a cap on this, this year.

● (2030)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the speech of the member for Calgary Nose Hill and my question is this. The extraordinary measures taken by this government to land 40,000 Syrian refugees into this country in the last year had an impact on countries in other parts of the world where refugees are also in desperate need of support. In fact, in Amnesty International's list of the top 10 countries generating refugees we find Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Central African Republic, and Eritrea.

Despite the fact that the member opposite asked us to slow down and increase security, despite the fact that the member opposite was part of the government that cut services to refugees, cut public housing, cut services around language training to immigrants and refugees over the last 10 years, my question is a very simple one. If we have an obligation to refugees, we have an obligation all over the world, not just one particular country or one particular population. If genocide is wrong, it is wrong everywhere. How do we clear the backlog created by the extraordinary effort to land 40,000 Syrians and balance that against the need to also respond to the refugee crisis right around the world in the countries I listed if we do not have a balanced approach that shares the burden of all countries and allows all countries access to our shores in order that they get refuge?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, in June 2015, the United Nations issued a report that called upon the international community to accelerate asylum claims for the Yazidi victims of genocide. Why? Why did the United Nations say prioritize these refugee claimants before anyone else? Because there are people who are being wiped off the face of this earth. There are people who cannot make it into the UN's referral process because, first of all, to get to a refugee camp is near to impossible and then when they arrive there they cannot stay there for appointment processes because they are persecuted when they get there. This is a well-documented fact.

There are so many people in the world who require the assistance of a generous country like Canada. That said, we should not just rely on the bureaucracy of the UN when we clearly see failures. I think the response has to be twofold. When we see genocide occurring, we have to call it what it is, which the government did not do. The government has several opportunities to vote to support the declaration of the Yazidi genocide and it failed to do that. The member opposite voted against that. Then we need to ensure that our processes to prioritize those victims reflect such declarations.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend for her speech. I was very proud of that well-thought-out and very well-spoken speech from her heart.

I want to talk about something that is hopeful. People in my riding have welcomed as private sponsors so many refugees in the last year. These are individuals who probably do not march and are probably not here in the gallery today, but they literally open up their homes and house people and help them learn English. They help them get jobs and it has been a huge success in southern Manitoba. We brought multitudes of refugees here under the private sponsorship program.

Could my colleague talk about how successful that is and how we can encourage that and find a win-win for everyone?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, the private sponsorship program for refugees is a hallmark of Canadian immigration policy. It allows individual Canadian citizens to raise funds, come together as groups, and to bring people to this country and support them through their integration into our economic and social fabric. It is international best practice and many of the refugees who came into Canada late in 2015, whom the Prime Minister took pictures with at the Pearson International Airport, were brought in through the generosity of private sponsors.

Tonight, as we look toward ways of welcoming more refugees to Canada, we know that this is best practice. My party calls upon the government to lift this ban on privately sponsored refugees and to ensure that when the government is taking photo ops, it is thanking the generosity of Canadians who raised the funds to bring refugees and to support them.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

I appreciate having the opportunity to take part in this important debate tonight.

First, please allow me to address the tragic events of Sunday night in Quebec City. When I first learned of this cowardly and senseless act of terrorism, I felt many emotions: outrage that innocent people in a place of sanctuary and worship could be subject to violence; sadness for the victims and for their families, and for whom the feeling of safety has been shattered; and concern that this act of intolerance could spur more intolerance. When I feel these emotions, I find myself reminded of a great Canadian, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who told us that love is better.

I say to all Canadians, let us choose love, love for those who will grow up without their loved ones, love for a community in mourning, even love for those who try to stoke fear to further their own narrow ends.

Whatever our ethnicity, our faith, or our background, we are all Canadians. We are all united against violence and hatred.

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I have heard from many of my constituents who are concerned they could be impacted by the immigration measures introduced recently by the Government of the United States of America. I share their concerns. I am an immigrant myself. I was relieved to learn that the Prime Minister's Office was in frequent contact with senior White House officials over the weekend, and that our embassy in Washington, D.C. continues to engage with the administration to get the best possible information on how these policy changes will impact Canadians.

Thanks to these efforts, we have been assured that Canadian citizens and permanent residents who are dual nationals are not affected by this executive order, even if they are citizens of one of the seven specified countries. All Canadian passport holders and permanent resident card holders should be able to travel to the United States as before. Our officials remain in close contact with the U.S. officials to receive further clarity.

I was also reassured by the words of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada both on Sunday and here tonight, when he said that any foreign nationals from the seven countries listed in the executive order who were transiting through Canada and are stranded will be provided temporary residence status until they can make arrangements to return home.

While we can disagree with them, each country has the right to set its own policies when it comes to immigration. What we can do is make our own choices, based on our own values, and model those values as an example to the world.

As an immigrant and a member of Parliament, I am proud to be a Canadian, and I am proud of the example that Canada is setting for the world.

Our country is open and welcoming. Canada has been lauded around the world for its leadership in welcoming refugees fleeing persecution, terror, and war. In 2016, in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, we welcomed and successfully resettled over 45,000 refugees.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the hon. member for Markham—Thornhill for his leadership and determination as the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship in achieving this goal. While we wish him good luck in his new role, we will miss his caring and compassion in this place.

I have had the opportunity to meet many of the Syrian refugee families who have settled in Scarborough, and their gratitude for the opportunity to be in Canada is overwhelming. These families, and especially the children, have been through so much, but to see the children be in a place that is safe, to see the twinkle in their eyes and the smiles on their faces as they strap on skates for the first time, or play in the snow in their first Canadian winter, warms the heart.

● (2035)

The support from the community has also been overpowering. I have met with local employers who have hired refugees and been so impressed with how hard they work, and how grateful they are for this opportunity.

On Saturday, I had the opportunity to join the Metropolitan United Church as it held a celebration marking the one-year anniversary

since it welcomed the Bakour family from Syria to its new home, Canada. Canadians have opened their arms and their hearts, as we always have, to those who are fleeing war and persecution, and who are just looking for what we take for granted, the opportunity to live in peace and give their children better opportunities than they have had.

There is still work to do. At the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, we completed a study on Syrian refugee resettlement and made a number of recommendations for improving the provision of important settlement services. I know the government will consider these recommendations and act accordingly. After all, in Canada better is always possible.

However, what will not change is the warmth and generosity of Canadians. In 2017, Canada will welcome 40,000 refugees and protected persons, which, other than last year, is one of the highest levels on record of refugees welcomed in Canada. With these efforts, Canada continues to be a key contributor to the international effort to address humanitarian protection issues, and offer asylum to the most vulnerable person fleeing persecution, terror, and war around the world.

However, it is not just about offering a safe haven for those fleeing persecution. Immigration benefits our country. Immigration grows our economy. Immigration contributes to our diversity, and our diversity is our strength.

Take this past weekend, for example. On this one weekend alone, I attended the following: the lunar new year celebrations with the Chinese community and with the Buddhist community at a Buddhist temple; the debut of a documentary exploring the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in Canada; a celebration at a United Church, marking the first anniversary of the Syrian refugee family it sponsored arriving in Canada; a Thai Pongal celebration with the Tamil community; the grand opening of a new Indian cuisine restaurant; and, the one-year celebration of a Tim Hortons franchise in my riding, owned by a Bangladeshi businessman. This is Scarborough. This is Canada. Immigrants start new businesses. They are job creators. Immigrants bring needed skills and new energy. They grow the economy. Immigrating parents and grandparents allow both parents to enter the workforce. They grow our tax base.

I was welcomed as an immigrant in 1999, and today I am a member of Parliament, my husband is working for a bank, one son is in university, and another is not far behind. We have a number of former refugees in this place, including the member for Parkdale—High Park, and our new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. They are making important and valuable contributions to their new homes, and making this country even greater.

We are a nation of immigrants. Other than our indigenous persons, everyone here is from somewhere else. Whether we are Canadians by birth or by choice, regardless of our language, our ethnicity, our faith, or our gender, the Canadian dream is open to everyone if we are willing to work hard. That equality of opportunity is one of the many things that make Canada great. This is the Canadian example. These are Canadian values. This is the model that Canada wants to share with the world. These values are why I am a Canadian. These values are why I am a member of Parliament. These are the values I will never stop fighting for.

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• (2040)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her remarks, for the work she spoke of, and indeed for some of the important issues she has talked about. I wonder if she would be interested in sharing her thoughts with the House specifically with respect to the present executive order.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, we have to stand by our Canadian values. Canada has always welcomed people fleeing persecution, war, and terror, and will continue to be a global leader in providing refuge to those people needing help. We have been assured by senior officials from the White House that Canadian citizens and those people holding permanent resident cards will not be affected by this executive order and can travel to the U.S.A. They will not be impacted.

• (2045)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party to again respond to the question my colleague from Alberta raised.

There is a very clear action that the Government of Canada could take. It has been called for time after time by Canadians in the streets. We have made the very formal request tonight here in the emergency debate. Under the safe third country agreement, there is a provision whereby Canada has the opportunity to simply suspend, for the time period of this executive order, the provision of that agreement to the United States, so those who may be stranded in the United States of America as refugees have the opportunity to claim asylum in Canada.

Could the member please respond to that specific request? Does she not think that when we draft those agreements, we think ahead to the occasion when the situation might break down and the United States could do the same to us? Does the member not think this would be the reasonable thing to do, at least in this interim period?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, Canada has always assured people fleeing war and persecution that they will be welcomed.

Regarding the safe third country agreement, the minister assured us today, and we were assured over the weekend, that the requirements of the agreement were being met. Canada will continue to monitor the situation, and will be in contact with officials. Canadians will be kept informed of the situation.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am standing here in total shock, and my heart is breaking.

We have an international responsibility to show leadership when something this awful happens. Today we are debating the U.S. travel and immigration ban. That is what we are here to talk about. This is an opportunity for the Government of Canada to stand and say “This is not okay”. It is a chance to stand up to President Donald Trump.

This is not okay. This is a ban based on race, religion, or place of birth. We need to stand and say that this is not going to happen and that we are going to make sure our voices are heard.

I know we are a welcoming community. In my riding, where I served for over eight years as an executive director of an organization that welcomed refugees and immigrants into our communities, people have raised enormous amounts of money,

from communities as small as Sointula to Campbell River, Comox, and Powell River. I am so proud they have worked so hard to get refugees into our country.

If one of us is not safe, then none of us is safe. Today, we are asking the government to stand up for Canadian values. Why will the government not suspend the safe third country agreement?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, as the minister said today, the requirements of the agreement are being met.

I want to let the hon. member know that Canada has always stood up for immigrants. It is a country made up of immigrants. Other than the indigenous people, everyone here is an immigrant. I am an immigrant who came here 17 years ago and call Canada my home.

Regardless of our culture, regardless of our faith, regardless of the colour of our skin, Canada has always welcomed new immigrants. We will continue doing that. We will continue to be a beacon of light for the whole world.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to let the families of the six Canadians who died in the brutal massacre in Quebec City know that as their members of Parliament we are committed to ensuring that hate, bigotry, and division have no place in Canada, that terrorism and violence against any community will never be tolerated or permitted on our soil. As we pray for those innocent lives, we want to let our brothers and sisters in the Canadian Muslim community know that we are with them and that they should feel safe and free as such intolerance and hatred has no room in Canada.

The recent executive order issued by the U.S. administration has banned nationals from seven countries from entering the United States for at least 90 days. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has used his authority to issue a public policy to help people who may be stranded as a result of the executive order. If they had made travel arrangements to enter the United States and have documents they would normally have needed to enter the U.S., but cannot due to the executive order, we can give them status or extend their status in Canada as long as they meet Canada's admissibility criteria.

The minister has asked his officers in the department to expedite a special permit to give such individuals status in Canada if they require it or extend their temporary status if that is required. If they have fallen out of status in Canada, IRCC can expedite the restoration of that status if they are eligible. The minister has given officers in the department permission to waive fees for these measures.

As we know, this executive order has also paused parts of the U.S. resettlement program to review its policy. We look forward to working with the U.S. when it finishes that analysis. In the interim, we will continue to be in close contact with the U.S. and our other allies, such as the United Nations Refugee Agency, to meet our resettlement needs.

The pause of the U.S. resettlement program has caused some people to ask the government how this may affect Canada's refugee and in-Canada asylum policies. Our commitment to refugees remains unchanged. Canada's commitment to refugees will remain on helping those who are vulnerable, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. We continue to work in regions all over the world to provide protection to vulnerable groups, including refugees in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Columbia, Eritrea, and Congo.

As we know, Canada relies on its partners, such as the United Nations Refugee Agency, to identify refugees in need of resettlement, who will then come to Canada as government-supported refugees. When making referrals for resettlement, the United Nations Refugee Agency uses assessments of protection needs and vulnerabilities, for example, identifying refugees with legal, physical protection or medical needs, survivors of torture or violence, women and girls at risk, and children and adolescents at risk.

Determinations of vulnerability and protection needs are made regardless of religious or ethnic backgrounds, gender identity or sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics. Of course, in many cases, these characteristics may be important elements in the agency's identification of particular individuals as vulnerable and in need of protection.

As I mentioned, the executive order issued by the U.S. has also caused some people to ask the government how the order may affect Canada's in-Canada asylum policies. I wish to assure the House that Canada's in-Canada asylum process will not be affected by this decision. Each refugee claim at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada will continue to be assessed on its own merits. As always, decision-makers at the Immigration and Refugee Board must be satisfied that a claimant has a well-founded fear of persecution or that he or she, if removed, would be subjected to a danger of torture or a risk to life, or of cruel and unusual punishment or treatment.

While Canada's policy on refugees and immigration remains open and generous, I wish to remind my hon. colleagues that it is also very thorough. Security is paramount and our refugee resettlement programs are designed with the safety and security of Canadians in mind.

● (2050)

Effective security measures are in place in all our refugee resettlement programs. In addition to a full medical examination, all refugees undergo a thorough criminal and security check to ensure they have not committed serious crimes in the past and they are not a security risk to Canada.

The government also collects biometrics, such as fingerprints and digital photos. This biometric information is then checked against immigration, law enforcement, and security databases. Of course, as part of our interview screening measures, we also collect biographical information, such as marriage and birth certificates. If there are any specific areas of concern, cases are then referred for more in-depth screening by our security partners.

We can all be proud of our country's long-standing tradition of providing protection and refuge to people from around the world fleeing tyranny, violent oppression, and persecution. Since the Second World War, more than one million refugees have come to

call Canada home. Given the relatively small size of Canada's population, this is a very impressive number.

Today, we continue to have one of the most generous immigration and refugee systems in the world. In fact, Canada welcomes one in 10 refugees resettled worldwide, more than almost any other industrialized country in the world.

The government remains strongly committed to maintaining our proud humanitarian tradition. We also remain strongly committed to the idea that immigration is critical to Canada's economic future. Our country's future success will be largely driven by attracting talented people from around the world.

As the Prime Minister has stated, "Diversity is our strength". Canada has succeeded culturally, politically, and economically because of our diversity, not in spite of it. Canada's diversity is also among our greatest assets in an increasingly interconnected global economy. Our diversity not only brings its own economic and social rewards, but with Canada's aging population, having a robust and efficient immigration system will also be critical to our long-term economic growth.

Canadians can be proud that Canada will continue to be a country that welcomes immigrants and refugees from all over the world.

● (2055)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the many members in the House who have shared with us information about their riding immigration policies in general and what the government has been doing.

All of that is great, and all of that is being discussed at committee and elsewhere. Tonight's discussion, though, is an emergency debate about the ban that has been imposed by the Trump administration. What we know is this. This ban is based on race, on religion, and on people's place of birth. We have a situation where refugees from these designated countries, as a result of the ban, are no longer welcome. The Trump administration has explicitly said that they are not allowed to enter the United States, at least for 90 days.

In this scenario, I wonder whether the member and the government could answer this question. How can they still believe the United States is still a safe place for those who have been designated by the ban to be not welcomed and cannot enter? If the government agrees with and understands that then, would the member agree that the safe third country agreement needs to be suspended immediately?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, as much as I want to thank the member for Parliament for Vancouver East who has raised this debate and her concerns about refugees, specifically those who are in the United States, and as much as I can say that I think the House will unilaterally not agree with the policies that have been implemented under the executive order in the U.S., the United States still remains a safer place than many other countries in the world. There is no imminent harm that would make us suspend those regulations.

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As we can see, there has been an overabundant level of support in the United States for the refugees, including from the former attorney general, who was recently suspended, the thousands who have flocked to the airport terminals, and the thousands of companies that have committed their support for them. Therefore, if we are looking at a serious and imminent threat, that is not for them. However, I absolutely agree that the United States is perhaps not as open as its reputation ought to be.

• (2100)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, like many of my fellow Canadians, I was extremely impressed by the spontaneous demonstrations that erupted in airports across the United States. The governors of several prominent states, not the least of which were California, New York, and Washington and many senators and members of Congress are all standing up and speaking out against this President's policies.

Our American brothers and sisters, those who have the courage to resist this President, are looking for international friends and solidarity.

Why is his government not showing the courage that American brothers and sisters demand from the international community? Why are we not showing solidarity with them and standing up to this President? Where are our principles?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, I do not see a prime minister or head of state of any country that has stood up for refugees, immigrants, and the rights of many more than this Prime Minister and this government have. We were the first and foremost to stand up to him. We are the first and foremost protectors, and actions speak louder than words.

When we have accepted one out of every 10 refugees in the world, which is more than any industrialized country, I think that speaks volumes. When we have said to those who were stranded at airports here that they could stay, that speaks louder than words.

I think we have done an abundantly clear job of showing their rights. We will never send anyone back who comes to these shores who has a rightful refugee claim, and I think this government stands by that.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable this evening, and I am looking forward to what he has to say later.

So often freedom and immigration actually go together. I am reminded of the tragedy in Quebec City the other night. We want to express our sympathies to the families and friends who have been impacted and to the victims of that recent shooting. Too often these events take place around the world.

I want to recognize one other person. Last summer, there was a group of us internationally who were able to go to Myanmar to discuss the Rohingya Muslim issue with the folks there. One of the gentlemen we met was U Ko Ni, a prominent Muslim lawyer who had spent a number of years as a legal advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi and who had worked with the National League for Democracy. The other day he returned to the Yangon airport and came out of the airport and was assassinated. We can only assume he was

assassinated for the work he has been doing. We should also recognize one of the taxi drivers who attempted to challenge the shooter and was killed as well.

We recognize that these events take place around the world, and every one of them breaks our hearts.

Tonight I would like to talk about a critical issue, and that is not of what other governments are doing but what our own government has been doing. That needs to be our first and foremost interest in this country.

The Liberal response to the U.S. travel ban has been basically self-congratulatory. It was pretty much underwhelming.

I want to talk about some of the issues around immigration that the Liberals have failed to address properly over the last year and a bit. There are a number of these issues. They include things like the successful integration of Syrian refugees and properly responding to Canadians and their desire to privately sponsor refugees. Mexican visas and Mexican visa removal is another one of those issues. Certainly one of the most prominent ones would be the failure of the current government to prioritize the Yazidi genocide victims.

We are all familiar with the story of the Yazidis and the fact that in August 2014, ISIS swept through the Sinjar area and the Yazidis were surrounded. In early August, tens of thousands fled. Thousands of men were killed. We discovered mass graves after that time. Women were abducted. There were many forced conversions. It took until 2016 for the world to begin to recognize that this actually had been a genocide and needed to be treated that way.

The government, unfortunately, over the last year, has resisted multiple attempts to call this a genocide and basically had to be shamed to the point where the Liberals would finally recognize it for what it was. The reason that is important is that out of that came multiple initiatives from this side of the House to try to encourage the Liberals to take a look at the Yazidis and how they might bring them here. One of the failures of the Liberals' policy has been that they have refused to consider any type of religious affiliation in their decisions as to which refugees to bring here. There are arguments for doing that, but the reality is that when they did that, they were not able to find the real victims, the ones who were the most persecuted minorities, because as they began looking through the United Nations camps, those folks were not there. They were too scared to go there. They were not able to go there, so as the government began to bring in refugees, it missed a very important component, which was dealing with the most persecuted minorities that existed.

There was a unanimous motion in the House, which we are all familiar with, that the government would begin to bring here Yazidi women and girls who had been victimized. It is unfortunate that we have come back to this session and still have to ask the Liberals if they can tell us if they have done this. In the last couple of days, in question period, the only answer has been a resounding silence and the refusal of the new minister to answer that question.

How many Yazidi women have been cleared to come to Canada? We cannot get an answer. While the world is distracted and looking at some of these other issues, we have some people who have been brutally treated who are trying to come to this country, and the current government does not seem capable of responding. It is unfortunate that we have had to listen to the minister evade the answer as to how many of these women and girls have been allowed to come here. It is time for the government to take responsibility on this issue.

● (2105)

There is another issue that has been near and dear to my heart. Over the last few years, I have been involved with religious freedom issues around the world. I have been able to work with people from many different countries and all kinds of faith groups in trying to reinforce the three articles and Article 18 of the United Nations charter.

In our election campaign in 2011, we made a decision to set up the office of religious freedom. It took us until about 2013 to get it established. It was amazing the work ambassador Andrew Bennett was able to do through that small office. He was only given a budget of about \$5 million per year. The office had a staff of five to seven people. Its mandate was to protect and advocate on behalf of religious minorities that were under threat and to oppose religious hatred and intolerance. Its mandate also included the promotion of the Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad.

I find it ironic that we are sitting here tonight talking about those very issues, yet the office of religious freedom no longer exists. It got by on a \$5 million budget with about five to seven employees, and it had incredible influence around the world.

I became involved with a group of parliamentarians who were working on religious freedom. Everywhere I went, I heard about the impression the office of religious freedom was making on governments in other countries. We would go to Europe and people would ask if there was something they could do to model that structure, because they saw how it was working. There were projects in places like Pakistan on educating and checking out school material and trying to make sure there was no hate material in the school material. The office was involved in a number of projects, and it made a huge difference in people's lives.

They worked in some of the most difficult areas of the world. I talked about Pakistan. Officials were in Ukraine, where they were trying to keep religious authorities from being a source of tension in the conflict there. They worked in Indonesia as well. The office was seen as a major positive contribution to Canada's reputation around the world. These projects addressed a growing demand around the world.

Since I became involved in this in 2010, it is interesting to see how this issue has exploded. It is not an issue that we do not think about anymore. Most of the time it seems that political issues around the world are tied to faith issues that are operating around them.

That office was set up at a good time and it was in a good place to do good work. That office was aligned with the government's larger priorities at the time. It gave Canada great influence in communities

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around the world. For such a small project, it had tremendous influence, and it was working directly with other governments.

The international contact working group was set up in 2015. Ambassador Bennett was the chair of that. It brought together 20 countries that were interested in dealing with issues of religious freedom. It also tried to deal with the kinds of issues we are talking about here and with finding a place for people to respect others' rights, a place where people could critically analyze other people's beliefs without being afraid of how they would be treated.

One of the things the group also did was work in parallel with the organization I have been involved with. It has probably the world's worst acronym. It is called the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. It has now had members join from dozens of countries that want to make this into a major issue.

I was disappointed when the government decided to cancel that initiative. It put another smaller office in place called the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion. It is located in a little corner of Global Affairs. To this point, nobody knows what it has done. The government tripled its budget, and 35 people work for it, but it has had no impact. It is an opaque organization. It has been frustrating. It is also frustrating that my time is almost gone.

In this situation, the battle against religious persecution was diminished by the decision of the government opposite, and it is too late for it to reconsider. It certainly took Canada out of a position of major influence on these issues of religious freedom and immigration and those issues around the world.

● (2110)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have seen over the last couple of days Canadians right across this country standing in solidarity with the Muslim faith community. In fact, Canadians stand every day in solidarity with all faith communities across our country.

This government created the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion. As my hon. colleague mentioned, the budget has been tripled over the previous office created by the previous government.

Human rights are a fundamental part of all of our international interventions in the world through our involvement with the UN, la Francophonie, and the Commonwealth. Our refugee and immigration policy is rooted in equal human dignity and human rights.

Would my hon. colleague across the way please acknowledge that when we accept refugees in Canada, it is because we believe in equal human dignity and the equal human rights of all persons?

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I think the difference is actually about painting a line. There is a definite line or different mark on the wall. We are just taking the paint and splashing it out there. The government in so many areas seems to have just taken that gallon of paint and thrown it against the wall to see what would happen.

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It is even in the refugee programs that the Liberals have brought in. The Liberals have brought refugees in here, and they wanted to meet a number and have bragged about that number ever since, but the reality is that they did not provide them with the programming they need. We do not see the language services. We do not see the job opportunities.

Meanwhile, we have private sponsorship across this country of groups of people who want to bring others in. They are providing them with jobs, friendship, and the community that they need. This has been far more successful.

I think the government needs to refocus. It needs to get a focus first of all, and then try to see it through.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for addressing the House on the critical issue of religious freedom. However, tonight's emergency debate was predicated on the question of how Canada should respond to the executive order of President Trump, which indefinitely suspends the settlement of Syrian refugees and temporarily bans people. How Canada should respond to that is the essential question before us. I would ask the member to address that question for us this evening.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, as my Liberal colleagues pointed out earlier, I believe each country makes its own choices, and the United States has made those choices. We welcome the time when refugees from around the world will be able to once again come to the United States. We certainly see that.

However, from Canadians' perspective, we need our government to be doing a good job on these immigration issues, bringing people in here, and giving them the support that they need so that they can become an active part of the Canadian fabric. We need the government to step up, give them the language training, the support, the jobs, and those kinds of things. Our private sponsorships have done a good job of that. Those are the issues that are really important to Canadians.

I would argue with my colleague that those issues of religious freedom are relevant to this whole discussion, and certainly getting more important all the time to Canadians.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member, of course, is correct when he said that people make their own choices. The United States has, and it has actually put forward a ban based on race, religion, and place of birth.

We have a choice as Canadian representatives and leaders of our own communities. The choice is before us. Will we be bystanders and say that this is okay, business as usual, and just carry on and be calm, or are we going to say no to this hatred and this divisive kind of policy? Are we going to actually hold true to what we all saw and said in the House in light of the Quebec City horrible incident, that we will stand with those who face hate, that we will challenge it, and we will put a path forward?

Will the member support the NDP proposals that we have tabled today?

• (2115)

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, the NDP members talk about standing together, but their rhetoric and volume says that they

will do anything but that. Certainly we have heard enough of that here tonight.

We stand here tonight as Canadians. We know that we have the best country in the world. We welcome people from around the world. Our government did that, and the current government has done that as well.

My message tonight is that the government needs to take responsibility for the people it is allowing in here, and provide them with the programming and the opportunities they need in order to become integrated into our Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that I was elected just over a year ago and that the atmosphere in the House of Commons has rarely been as sombre as it has been since the tragic events that occurred in Quebec City.

To build on what my colleague just said, there is no doubt that Canada is a country of immigrants. The story of my ancestors is the same as that of many Canadians. I am proud to say that my family is one of the oldest immigrant families in Canada, even though people cannot tell just by looking at me.

My story is that of the Germans who came to Canada during the War of American Independence. The British hired 30,000 German mercenaries, one-third of whom were based in Quebec. In the end, 1,200 German soldiers decided to be part of the population of Quebec beginning in the 1780s. Today, many Germans have families made up exclusively of Canadians or Quebecers. I am talking about the Bessette, Besré, Hamel, Jomphe, Payeur, Roussel, Wagner, Wilhelmy, and of course the Berthold families.

In my opinion, there is no doubt that Canada is a welcoming country. People from around the world have helped to shape Canada into the country that it is today. Those who choose to come to Canada do so for all sorts of reasons, not always because of our climate, but because of our people, our values, the prospect of success, and, most of all, the opportunity to live a better life.

In Canada, immigration is not just a matter of statistics. We are not here to figure out which government Canadians think does a better job. I believe that the important thing is the way we welcome immigrants and our ability to help them in this important life choice. That is important to every immigrant who chooses our country.

This evening, we are gathered here to debate Canada's response to our neighbour's decision to temporarily ban from the United States nationals from seven countries where thousands of people have been the victims of war, dictatorship, misery, and poverty over the past few years. The countries in question are Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya.

Earlier, I was planning to deliver a very different speech, but because of my colleagues' remarks this evening, I decided to change course. I listened to my colleagues talk about refugees, victims of war and misery. I listened to my colleagues talk about what is going on elsewhere. I listened to my colleagues talk about other people.

I was really struck by something that was said by my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill, who is the official opposition's immigration critic. She said that Canada is a destination of choice for refugees from around the world because it is a peaceful country. My colleague rightly wondered whether we are taking that peace for granted.

That brought another thought to mind: what if it were us? If we were talking about our fathers, our mothers, our sisters, and our neighbours tonight, would we be saying the same things? Imagine war breaking out in Thetford Mines. Imagine witnessing the systematic extermination of citizens, of our neighbours, because of their race, their beliefs, or their political affiliation.

I invite Canadians to imagine what their neighbourhood would look like if their street was bombed; if businesses were destroyed one after the other; if they suddenly lost their jobs, had no food, and did not have the means to earn some money. Let us imagine that we no longer had a roof over our heads. Let us imagine that we lost contact with every member of our family and that we did not know where they were, whether they were dead or had been tortured, or whether our sisters and mothers had been raped. Let us imagine that all our family members had to flee their city, no matter where in Canada, to ensure their safety and survival.

When we put ourselves in the shoes of the people who live with this reality every day, and we picture the images and faces of our loved ones, we cannot look at refugees in the same way.

● (2120)

We can imagine asking for help and hoping that someone, somewhere, will answer our call for help.

Of course, we are here to talk about the U.S. decision, which we unfortunately can do little about. Our Prime Minister responded by taking to social media. Canada's response, according to the Prime Minister's tweet, was as follows: "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength. #WelcomeToCanada."

These are fine words, which elicit more images. However, that will not change the lives of the people we want to help. Since that tweet, there has been no concrete action, no political or administrative gesture to make these words reach those they should really be intended for.

I listened earlier to the speech by the new Minister of Immigration, whom I congratulate on his appointment. I heard him give a speech on what Canada is doing on immigration. It was a self-congratulatory speech that did not provide any concrete solutions to the current situation.

There are things that could have been done a year ago. There are things that we could do now to speed things up. Unfortunately, it seems that the government has done nothing, despite having many opportunities to take action. Of course the government cannot give a response in 140 characters. Governments do not make commitments in 140 characters. It is possible, however, to be more proactive and do certain things.

Let me give a few examples.

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Consider the Yazidi refugees, a subject the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship did not even bother to address in his speech this evening, despite everything we have talked about in the House regarding the importance of taking action to help Yazidi refugees. It took my colleague asking a question for the immigration minister to finally bother addressing the situation facing Yazidi refugees. Despite the unanimous motion that was adopted here last October on fast-tracking refugee claims and the promise to process them within 120 days, we have yet to see any concrete action. The Liberals are all talk and no action. Not one new Yazidi refugee has been welcomed here in Canada.

We want tangible action, not just vague promises. The government committed to taking action within 120 days of the adoption of the motion. The deadline is February 22. The government must set a target for the number of Yazidi refugees. The government must fast-track the asylum claims of Yazidi victims of ISIS so that they may find refuge in Canada.

ISIS continues to commit genocide against the Yazidis in northern Iraq. Thousands of Yazidi women and girls are being detained by ISIS soldiers. They are being raped, beaten, and sold as slaves. We must act. Unlike the Liberal government, the Conservatives in the official opposition are not afraid to call these crimes by their name: genocide.

In closing, the official opposition has made several suggestions and recommendations to the government to help it provide a concrete response and tangible assistance to the Yazidi refugees and to respond in our own way to recent developments south of the border.

I invite the government to go over the various proposals that the official opposition has made in the past, to act immediately, and to show compassion toward these Yazidi refugees, these women who are being tortured, raped, and used as slaves by ISIS. This is a tangible response to what is happening with our neighbours to the south.

● (2125)

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard this word "courage" mentioned several times tonight.

Let me say that courage is not what one does when the cameras are on or when a country passes a policy that contradicts or is not consistent with the progressive traditions of this country. Courage is what people do when they need to act systematically and consistently to solve crises regardless of whether or not the world's media are talking about it.

This country, a year ago, let in 40,000 Syrian refugees. The courage of the other two parties was demonstrated in their campaign commitments: 10,000 from the NDP, 10,000, afraid of the backlash; and the party across the way that just finished the question committed to 11,800 over two years. That is not courage; that is cowardice.

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The government has acted, not when the world's cameras were focused on it. The government is systematically tripling the number of refugees we have the capacity for, making sure refugees right across the globe are provided with assistance and refuge in this country, setting goals, not caps.

Does the member opposite not wish he had run for this party with the sentiments he just expressed? This party has the courage of its convictions, and this party is the party that is settling refugees.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, shouting or trying to show the world that they are better than others is no way to achieve the best results. Let us not forget that the 40,000 refugees that were brought into Canada last year were approved by the previous government. The Liberals seem to forget that. They fail to mention that, but that is the reality. That is what we did. We came up with the private sponsorship program and it worked. In fact, the initial images he is criticizing were images of refugees that had been approved by the previous government.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was surprised by the government's tone in this debate.

The government is talking about the 10,000 refugees that it promised would arrive before December 31. How many refugees did it succeed in bringing to Canada by December 31? Approximately 10,000. It was simply a realistic promise to say that 10,000 refugees would be brought to Canada by December 31. The government promised that 25,000 refugees would be brought here. The 25,000 arrived three months later in 2016. I hope that the government will change its tone. It is not really the tone that I was hoping to hear today.

I am wondering whether my colleague thinks that the ideal response would be to compensate for the United States' decision by welcoming more refugees to Canada, thus sending the international community a clear message that, if our neighbour and ally does not want to take in any more refugees, we will compensate for that and meet our international obligations. We are going to ensure that our country takes a more active role in protecting refugees if our neighbour does not want to do so.

Is this not the time to compensate and send a strong message like that to the international community?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the government members' attitude seems to suggest that they are really angry this evening. They are angry because they failed to meet the needs of refugees. That is what is happening. There is a very attractive and appropriate solution and that is a unanimous motion of the House of Commons to take action and welcome more Yazidi refugees. I think that would be a way of taking immediate action tonight and doing something tangible rather than getting angry about attacks on this government's image.

• (2130)

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Hypocrisy makes my skin crawl, Madam Speaker.

Some people are making comments and using tragic situations to score political points, saying things that are completely false, and trying to lecture to a government that has accepted 40,000 Syrian

refugees. It is shameful to hear things like that from the other side of the House. I am a Syrian Canadian myself, and after 40,000 Syrians have come here, you are telling me that the current government is doing nothing. What do you have to say—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I would remind the member that he must address his questions and comments to the Speaker.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable can give a very brief response, for his time is up.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, if hypocrisy makes one's skin crawl, mine has been crawling nonstop for the past year.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: It has been for 10 years.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would remind the member for Thérèse-De Blainville that when another member is speaking, members must respect that.

The hon. member for Mount Royal.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

I want to thank the member for Vancouver East for initiating this debate.

[*English*]

I want to change the tone of the debate a little, first because it should be non-partisan and, second and more important, because there are lessons to be learned from this debate. I have heard a lot of congratulatory comments tonight about how Canada is different, how in Canada we have had this incredible tradition of bringing in immigrants and refugees, and that we have always done it. While it is true that in the last few decades we have had a very good tradition of bringing in immigrants and refugees to this country, that has not always been true.

I got into federal politics from municipal politics a few years ago. Why did I do so? One of the important reasons was Quebec's charter of values. The separatist government in Quebec put forward a law that said that, as a mayor, I had to fire people because they were going to wear a kippah, a hijab, or a turban to work. In my conscience and the conscience of my council in the city of Côte-Saint-Luc, we could not do that. We held a rally for religious freedom on the steps of our city hall, bringing together people and religious leaders from all faiths to say no, because that is not Canadian.

The fact that we lived this only a couple of years ago in my home province of Quebec means that Canadian governments, provincial governments, and politicians are no different here from politicians elsewhere. People can always capitalize on xenophobia. People can always spark fear in the population.

We are so lucky to live in a country where all three major parties share the view that Canada is a place where immigrants and refugees should be welcomed and that we should care about people, whatever their race, religion, sexual orientation, or nationality. We should all be happy about that.

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When it comes time for me to talk about the U.S. executive order, which is the subject of the debate, I want to first say that, of course, as quasi-Americans, since we all watch U.S. TV, listen to U.S. pundits, watch the election campaign with the same intensity that our colleagues down south did, we also have to remember that we are not American and we do not have the rights that the people in the U.S. do to choose their president.

While I am profoundly shocked by what is in this executive order, it is an American decision. I applaud the protestors at airports, I applaud those in Congress who are fighting this, and I applaud those who are going to court, but I want to look at this executive order as if somebody proposed it in Canada and then comment on it as if a Canadian politician proposed this.

What are the things we should learn about this order? Number one, one does not put forward executive orders without consultation. One does not forget to ask the state department and the people who work there, who are the experts, what the ramifications are of an executive order. One does not forget to ask the attorney general, who has to defend an executive order in court, whether it complies with the constitution or laws of one's country. One does not forget to consult with the enormous number of stakeholders who would be concerned with such an order. I hope that in Canada, before our executive acts, it will always consult with Parliament, parliamentary committees, and other groups that have interest in it before taking action.

Number two, one cannot put forward executive orders that impact people who are already in transit with valid visas issued by oneself. Orders should not be made retroactively. People have a right to depend on government laws being in place for a period of time and the right to travel without wondering if, when they get to their country with which they have a visa, they are going to be excluded.

Number three, one does not discriminate based on country of origin or religion, when making law. One does not say that just because people are born in one country, are citizens of only one country, or come from only one religious group because there is an exemption for those who are from religious minorities, they are excluded from a country. That is not what I believe in, and I do not think any of us do.

This is where I want to draw our history to everyone's attention. We have to remember that we in Canada have done this, as has the U.S. in the past. There have been many times in our history when the United States has been more welcoming than Canada. We should not congratulate ourselves on just being better than everyone else. There was a period of time when Chinese were excluded from the right to immigrate to Canada. So were other Asians, Sikhs, Hindus, and people from all over Asia. Eastern Europeans were discriminated against. Southern Europeans were discriminated against in the 1920s and 1930s.

•(2135)

I come from the Jewish community. We all remember that when the Jewish community needed Canada the most, in the thirties, when Hitler was in power, the doors of Canada were closed to Jewish refugees. Irving Abella's *None is Too Many* is a wonderful book that explains what happened; but let us talk about the process of the *St. Louis*.

The *St. Louis* was a ship that came out of Hamburg in May 1939 with people who had valid visas to Cuba. They were celebrating. They were going to be saved from what was happening to them, being persecuted in Germany. Yet, when they arrived in Havana harbour, Cuba unilaterally changed its rules and invalidated what, until then, were valid visas for these immigrants coming to Cuba. That is what happens when we retroactively change things. Cuba denied entry, and so the ship steamed up toward the United States, with the hope that the United States would open its doors; but the United States did not open its doors. Then there was just one hope before they went back to Europe, and that was Canada—and Mr. Blair and Mr. King closed the doors of Canada to those refugees.

I hope one day a Canadian government will apologize for what happened with the *St. Louis*.

We have to remember that this can happen here. Coming to the end of my speech, one of the things I want to say is that we should always remember that this could happen here. We have to be vigilant.

Second, we have to look at what happened in the order. I think the government acted appropriately by clarifying, immediately, that Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada should not be affected by the order. That was the appropriate first thing to do.

Then we have to look at whether we increase the number of privately sponsored refugees or allow more refugees into Canada as a result. I think the government should be open to considering raising the number of privately sponsored refugees. I think the total number of refugees would have to be an international agreement because we cannot, unilaterally, react to what one country does when we are just one small country of the globe. I think we should be talking to our international counterparts to see if there is an international action.

With respect to the safe third country agreement, I want to say that I have looked into this and I do not see where, right now, somebody could be impacted by being refused entry to the United States as a refugee, having reached the shores of the United States, and then come to Canada—that is where this would apply. The minister has an obligation to look at all four pillars of the agreement on an ongoing basis. I am assuming that he will. If we see the United States actually refusing people who reached its shores according to international conventions from being considered to be refugees over the next 120 days, I am confident the minister will react. At this point, what I understand from the United States is that it is not acting that way to people who reach its shores, but it is something important to consider.

I thank the NDP for raising this issue.

•(2140)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his passionate speech.

In remembering the history, there is no question there are many lessons to be learned. It is ironic, is it not, that the Trump edict actually came on International Holocaust Remembrance Day?

Having said that, what are we going to do about it here in Canada?

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The member talked about a lot of things, but I want to touch on the safe third country agreement. The issue is this. When people get into the United States, which is deemed to be a safe country under this agreement, they cannot make application for refugee status to Canada or anywhere else. That is the reality. When we have a country that has declared, “You are banned; you are not welcome; and we don’t want you because of where you come from, because of your race, and because of your religion”, would they feel safe there? Would we feel safe there? Would we not want to leave? However, they are not allowed to come to Canada and make application for refugee status because of this agreement.

Under those circumstances, should we not immediately suspend the agreement?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, if the United States were to take action, with respect to refugees who have reached the shores of the United States, and act in a way that is not compliant with the international treaties, then I believe the minister would have to consider that the treaty was not being respected and would have to take that action. My understanding, and this is where this decree needs to be clarified, is that the United States is not taking that action, with respect to people who reach the shores of the United States. It is stopping action on accepting refugees from abroad who are applying to come to the United States under a long process. It is not doing that, at this point, in my understanding of what I can read, with respect to people who reach the shores of the United States.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the strongest possible terms, I want to commend the member. I know he is someone who takes his responsibilities very seriously and always says exactly what he thinks, and that is what we need more of in this place. I want to ask him to comment on this issue of the clarification with respect to Canadians. We have heard from the government that the Americans have told the government that Canadian citizens will not have an issue. On the other hand, we have heard from Canadians who are very concerned because although we have this assurance, the executive order is anything but clear on this issue and there is the possibility that those Canadians who are now in the United States will not be able to re-enter the United States after leaving.

Has the government received this in writing? Maybe the member does not know whether the cabinet has received this in writing, but I would appreciate it if he could share his thoughts with respect to this clarification, and how clear it is.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the very lucid comments from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

With respect to Canada’s obligations, Canada’s number one obligation is with respect to our citizens in permanent residence and their ability to travel freely throughout the United States. Based on what the minister has said tonight, and I want to congratulate my colleague, the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, my understanding is that Canada has indeed received such assurances. I certainly hope we will receive them in writing as well. We need to clarify what was in this very poorly drafted and ambiguous decree.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to join my colleagues on all sides of the House in congratulating the member for Mount Royal for a very passionate and thoughtful speech. However, on the last point with respect to the safe third country agreement, Professor Arbel, a University of British Columbia law professor who studied that, said that if Canada takes its refugee protection obligations seriously, “then that comes with a mandate to re-evaluate whether we can adequately consider the United States to be a safe country for refugees, and I think we cannot. And the logical corollary of that would be that we have to scrap the Safe Third Country Agreement.” She said that, as did the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers in the clearest terms, as did the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

That is good enough for us. Why is it not good enough for the member?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, the minister has an ongoing obligation under that agreement to evaluate that the United States satisfies four criteria. From what I have read from the U.S., my understanding is that it is not taking any action to not comply with international treaties for those who reach the United States. In my own reading, I believe that it is still compliant, as the minister said tonight, but he has an ongoing obligation to evaluate, and if in the end we see that something is happening which is contradictory to the international treaties, I am confident my colleague will take action.

• (2145)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight. I thank my colleague from Mount Royal for sharing his time with me. He is such a passionate speaker, as we all just witnessed. He is definitely a hard act to follow.

I am sure that most members in this House would agree that this is a critical time in the world, but despite this act of the United States, in addition to the act of terror we saw only a few days ago, Canada continues to show compassion, and Canada continues to show love. I am extremely proud of the response that the Prime Minister gave to the executive order when he said that Canada’s doors would be open, particularly to those in need and to those who were displaced by the executive order.

There is no doubt that we are experiencing perhaps the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. A quarter of a million people have died in civil war and more have been wounded. Inside Syria, 13.5 million people need urgent help, 6.5 million are internally displaced, and 4.8 million have fled.

However, our response and the response of Canadians, the generosity of Canadians throughout the country, and the action of this government have led to nearly \$1 billion in humanitarian aid. Canadians individually have donated over \$30 million, which has been matched by the federal government. I think the crisis has actually brought out the best in us.

In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, over 200 refugees from Syria have relocated to Kingston and have made it their home. It is the diversity in Canada that we value so much, because we realize that our diversity actually makes us stronger.

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There was a very interesting scenario a couple of months ago when I was at an event where people were being acknowledged for all the work that they were doing to help the Syrians come to Canada. I had the opportunity to stand up and speak. I thanked the individual organizations for their work, the United Way, the Rotary Club, the other organizations that participated, the individuals who have come forward to show their kindness. I thanked them for doing what they did for the Syrians to bring them to Canada and to Kingston.

After that event, a gentleman came up to me and said, "You did a really good job of thanking everybody for what they did, but you never thanked the Syrians for coming to Canada." I did not quite understand that at first, and then he explained something which made so much sense. When we think about those refugees who are moving across the globe, who have made a decision to take their families and leave, who have travelled by boat, who have stayed in refugee camps, who have fought the systems to get to a safe place, these are the exact people we want in our communities. These are the people who make our communities strong, who drive the economic engines of communities. That is why diversity, accepting immigrants and accepting refugees from throughout the world, is so critically important.

I myself am the product of two immigrants, whose parents chose to come to Canada in the 1950s after the Second World War when much of Europe was displaced.

Tonight we are talking about the executive order more specifically, and while this is a time of uncertainty for some, the Government of Canada is working with the American administration to get clarity on the impact of the recent executive order. The minister has already addressed a number of key questions, but the government will continue to engage officials in the American administration to gather more information and keep Canadians informed.

While we continue to seek clarity, I can assure this House that nothing has changed regarding Canada's attitude towards immigration and humanitarian treatment of those in need of protection.

It is important to point out that the United States has always been a strong ally in helping to resettle vulnerable and persecuted people from around the world. Along with Canada and Australia, the United States has been one of the top three refugee resettlement countries for a number of years now. We understand that the new administration has paused parts of its resettlement program to review its policy. We will continue to be in close contact with the U.S. and look forward to the analysis that it will bring forward when it is finished this process.

In the meantime, we will continue to engage the U.S. and other close allies around the world, including the United Nations Refugee Agency, to move forward on meeting resettlement commitments.

• (2150)

In short, Canada's commitment to refugees will continue to focus on the most vulnerable, regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Canada has always played a role and will continue to do so. As the Prime Minister often says, diversity is our strength. The Prime Minister has also pointed out that Canada's policy on refugees and

immigration is open yet also rigorous, focusing on making sure that the processes are followed and that security is always strongly addressed.

The recent executive order issued by the U.S. administration has caused some people to ask the government how the order may affect Canada's refugee and in-Canada asylum policies. For example, some people are wondering if the order will affect the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement, as we have heard repeatedly asked tonight. Under this agreement, refugee claimants are expected to make their claims in the first country in which they enter unless they qualify for an exemption. This principle is recognized by the United Nations Refugee Agency.

The safe third country agreement remains an important tool for Canada and the U.S. to work together on the orderly handling of refugee claims made in our countries. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act requires the continual review of the countries designated as safe third countries. The purpose of the review process is to ensure that the conditions that led to the designation as a safe third country continue to be met. The Government of Canada has no indication, to my understanding, that the executive order has had any impact on the American asylum system.

The minister has said, as we have heard, that he will continue to monitor the situation, but in the meantime, the safe third country agreement remains in effect. Canada has, and will continue to have, a strong asylum system that provides protection for those in genuine need of it. It has safeguards to ensure that those who would face harm are not sent back to persecution. I strongly believe that this will not change.

As I get to the end of my speech, I would like to say that it is always easy to pull back and we are seeing that in other parts of the world. We are seeing countries pull back. Canada has had numerous examples of where we have not made that decision and instead where we have been the welcoming beacon of hope for many different refugees throughout the world. As a new country in the early 20th century, we accepted thousands of persecuted Jews. Between 1947 and 1952, one-quarter of a million displaced Europeans came to Canada. In 1956, 37,000 Hungarians escaped Soviet tyranny. In 1968 and 1969, we welcomed 11,000 Czech refugees. Between 1970 and 1980, more than 60,000 boat people found refuge in Canada after the Vietnam war. In 1999, Canada took over 5,000 Kosovars.

As President Obama said when he was here, the world needs more Canada, and I could not agree more. I said earlier that both my parents are immigrants and as said by another colleague earlier tonight, unless we are of aboriginal descent or belong to one of our first nations, we are all immigrants. We have all come here and contributed to this country to make it so great and to make it what it is.

S. O. 52

My grandfather lived in Holland and spent the latter part of the Second World War in hiding. As a Dutch man, he worried as the Germans were going through Amsterdam literally pulling men from their families to work in factories. He spent two years in hiding. When he finally was liberated and walked on the streets of Amsterdam for the first time in about two years, it was Canadian soldiers that he encountered. That is when he decided that he would move his family to Canada.

That is the reputation we have around the world. The world knows that Canada is open and the world knows that Canada is willing to accept people in need. I could not have been prouder of the way our Prime Minister responded, albeit there has been criticism over the medium that was used, but he was quick to say and quick to remind the world that Canada would be there in the time of need for the most vulnerable.

• (2155)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, Amnesty International, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Quebec immigration lawyers association, and some 200 law professors have all written to say that the government needs to suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement in light of the unbelievable, alarming ban that the Trump administration has put in place.

The minister and the government argue that we do not need to do that because we have not seen anything that will really affect this at this moment. Let me ask the member this question. He said he comes from a family of immigrants. If that ban impacted you and you were in that country at this moment—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the Chair.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Through you, Madam Speaker, let us put that in the case of all of us. If we were one of those individuals being targeted with hate and derision, would we not want a country like Canada to say that we would lift this ban so we could make an application to have refugee status in Canada?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, my colleague has asked this question a number of times tonight. I hope she is not disappointed that I might not be the one to give her the answer she is looking for.

It is important to point out that the government has made it very clear what its position is on this, that it will continue to accept refugees who are affected by this travel ban.

More so, and I spoke about this in my speech, there is a mechanism within the agreement to continually review it, and it is up to the minister to do that. I have great faith that he will do that and at the right time make the necessary decisions so it is in the best interest of those who are fleeing other parts of the world looking for safe harbour.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am only able now to rise for the first time to address the substance of this debate, having been here for several hours. I am grateful to have a chance to put a question to the member for Kingston and the Islands.

While we have been debating, I received an email from a 19-year-old young woman in my riding who wrote me this. Her name is Rachel, and I did not get permission to use her last name. I will read this for Rachel. She wants her voice heard.

I do not want to have to explain to my future children that I was alive when refugees were turned away from the United States while Canada did nothing. I understand that some statements have been made; however, I believe that action needs to be taken....I would like to ask you to try to ensure that we are on the right side of history.

I applaud so much what the Liberal government has done in bringing in 40,000 Syrian refugees. I appreciate the Prime Minister taking an early stand, and the symbolism is profound that our new Minister of Immigration is himself a refugee originally from Somalia. However, symbolism and good wishes will not be enough. Amnesty International is right. The Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers is right. The 200 law professors who signed the a are correct. We need to take action proactively before people are caught in the jaws of a reckless and discriminatory government.

The Prime Minister does not have to attack the President of the United States. He can try to have good relations. However, by our actions, we will be known.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for not only addressing her question here, but for reading a letter that one of her constituents wrote to her. That is extremely noble.

I would argue that there has not been merely symbolism coming from the government. As pointed out by other colleagues this evening, this government has delivered 40,000 Syrian refugees alone last year to Canada. It has done so much more than the Conservatives did when they were in power, and more than NDP members had committed to doing in their election platform.

I appreciate the member's comments. I disagree that it is just about symbolism. This government has shown actual, real leadership when it comes to this file.

• (2200)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Last Friday, the world looked on in shock as the United States announced a ban on immigration from seven Muslim countries. In light of the dire global event, it gives me hope and a great sense of pride to stand here today and reflect on the warmth and generosity with which Canadians welcome newcomers to our country.

When we think of Canada, we think of a country that is aware and proud of the fact that it has been built on immigration. Over the years, the convergence of many different cultures from all over the world has only made the country stronger.

As an immigrant to Canada myself, I am immensely proud of the contributions the country's diverse population of immigrants has made. I am also incredibly proud to call myself a citizen of a country that welcomes immigrants unreservedly and gives the opportunity for a new life to refugees.

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Canada must continue to be a beacon for those seeking refuge from the danger, no matter their religion or origin. This is not a country that discriminates against those who need our help. This is not a country in which fear will ever create division and hostility. This is a country that is stronger, safer, and more prosperous than ever thanks to the contributions of immigrants.

The reality is that when a country opens its doors and welcomes immigrants, it reaps the benefit for generations to come. Immigration has made Canada more diverse and prosperous as newcomers contribute their knowledge and experience in the workforce, which in turn strengthens the economy.

Immigrants have been recognized as exceptionally motivated, dedicated, and innovative entrepreneurs and employees. Of course, this is not the extent of the benefits we see from immigration. Immigrants also contribute to the military, first responders, the arts, academia, and public service.

Aside from these concrete economic benefits, Canada's communities are more vibrant and stimulating because of ethnic diversity. I am proud to represent Markham—Unionville, one of the most immigrant-rich ridings in Canada.

Canadians welcome newcomers to this country because we are a tolerant and understanding nation. Canadians are eager to help refugees in any way possible, and in desperate times like now, when the world doubts the compassion of people in response to the refugee crisis, it is important that Canada express its unfaltering support for refugees and immigrants of all backgrounds.

That is why I am heartbroken over the terrorist attack in Quebec City this week that killed innocent Muslim worshippers in one of the safest places in our country. All Canadians, and everyone around the world, know that this hatred and intolerance is not representative of the Canada and Quebec I know and love.

The Liberals' management of the immigration file has been haphazard and incompetent. They have failed to prioritize victims of genocide in Iraq and Syria. It is clearly the duty of countries like Canada and the U.S. to shelter groups that ISIS is persecuting. This includes Yazidis, Assyrians, Christians, and Muslims alike.

The government accepted the Conservative motion to expedite Yazidi refugees to Canada and committed to take action within 120 days. That was in October last year. Their time will run out on February 22, and the Liberals have yet to share their plan with Canadians. The Liberals are excellent at making commitments on which they do not intend to follow through. However, we had hoped that in this matter of life and death, the Liberals would not just say empty promises. Are they just not serious about helping the victims of genocide?

● (2205)

ISIS continues to commit unspeakable atrocities against the Yazidi people in northern Iraq, including rape, mutilation, and enslavement. Thousands of Yazidi women and girls remain in captivity. We need to see action now. The previous Conservative government always prioritized persecuted religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities for resettlement in Canada.

We call on the Liberal government to set a specific target number of Yazidi refugees to bring to Canada immediately. It is crucial the government process Yazidi asylum claims in an expedited manner so that those who are persecuted by ISIS can take shelter and find a home in Canada.

The Liberals have completely failed to uphold our high standards for protecting human rights. Not only have they shied away from calling these crimes what they truly are, genocide, but the Liberals have also failed to stand with our allies in the fight against ISIS, and decided to end our combat mission and withdraw our CF-18s.

Over the last year, the Conservatives have put forward numerous recommendations to help Yazidis. We have asked to treat the declaration of genocide as an immediate call to action for Canada in which a whole-of-government approach is required, especially targeting the areas of humanitarian aid, military intervention, and resettlement.

We have implored the government to act upon the June 2016 United Nations recommendation to accelerate the asylum claims of Yazidi victims of genocide. It should review the selection process used by the United Nations to identify refugees for the government sponsored refugee stream, and encourage changes if necessary.

The government must examine the need to restore the exemption for Syrian and Iraqi refugees from the mission cap under the privately sponsored refugees program in order to fully harness the generosity of Canadian private sponsors.

IRCC must review processing times in Canada for asylum claims of victims of genocide, in both the government sponsored and private sponsorship stream, and make process improvements. Specific targets must be set for the number of victims of genocide within our refugee sponsorship programs, and put mechanisms in place to measure whether we are meeting these targets in order to measure efficacy.

The bottom line is that we must examine and implement innovative ways to identify victims of genocide. It is well known that many of these people experience difficulties by being identified as part of the UN selection process.

Regarding Syrian refugees, the Liberals appear to have treated the Syrian refugee crisis as a numbers game, caring only about how many refugees they could bring to Canada in a limited time period. Sadly, they have neglected to consider the long-term impacts.

The Syrian refugee crisis is a tragedy. All Canadians want to help this terrible situation. Canada is an open and generous country. The Conservatives believe, as we committed to during the election campaign, that Canada should be extending that generosity to resettle more Syrian refugees fleeing persecution. This is a terrible humanitarian crisis, and Canada needs to help.

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However, the plan released by the Liberals shows, once again, a massive increase in the estimated costs over what their platform document indicated during the election. They did not factor in the basic necessities that Syrian refugees needed, like language training, job training and assistance finding work, and for the love of everything holy, food. Syrian refugees were forced to use municipal food banks, which put a major strain on other persons.

I will stop here since my time is up.

● (2210)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear what my colleague from across the aisle mentioned. Over the past many days, I have received numerous calls from my constituents telling me how much they want Canada to continue to be a welcoming country. I have seen that in my own community. We have welcomed more than 30 Syrian families over the past year, and over the month of January I toured many of our local settlement agencies to see how we were doing with the resettlement plans, to make sure that we were setting up our newcomers for success. I was getting great feedback about all of the work that is being done by people in our community to ensure that our newcomers are being set for success in this country.

Having heard the comments, I would like to know what my colleague has done to make sure that newcomers arriving in his riding are being set for success with our settlement agencies and with services.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, my riding is one of the most diverse communities in the country. With the various communities, we help out whomever we can help out, whether Syrian refugees or other refugees. However, the issue here today is the people stuck at the airport, and what the government is going to do. You are in the government. You have a majority government. What you bring to the table—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind the member that he is to address his comments to the Chair, please.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, they are in a majority government. They have all the access for anything and everything. What they are trying to do and what they are achieving, they can do many things. One of the options is private sponsorship. If the Liberals take the cap off the number of private sponsorships, there are thousands of people in the churches, in the mosques, and in various places who are willing to help these people. Allow them, please talk to your government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I just want to remind the member that he is to address comments to the Chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been directing my questions mostly for the government members tonight about the suspension of the safe third country agreement.

I would like to ask this member whether the Conservatives support the NDP's call to immediately suspend the safe third country agreement.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Through me, no problem.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, I do not have any problem on that issue, but again, at the end of the day on the government side they will decide what they bring to the table. If the government is willing to do it, we do not have a problem.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member. Apparently the Conservative Party has a new-found faith and interest in accepting refugees and immigrants from across the world. With that in mind, I wonder if the hon. member would agree—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just want to remind the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that he does not have the floor. The member for London North Centre has the floor, so I would ask for that respect.

The hon. member for London North Centre.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, I wonder, with this new-found interest that the Conservative Party has in accepting refugees and immigrants, if the hon. member agrees with his colleague from Simcoe—Grey that immigrants ought to undertake a values-based test to enter the country.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, the former Conservative government was always on the immigrants' side. Years ago, when there were issues with Tamils in Sri Lanka, all those refugees came and it was Mr. Mulroney who brought them in. This is nothing new. Look at me. Look at how many immigrants we have on our side. This is not a Liberal thing that Canada was built by immigrants. We will continue to support newcomers to the country.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this occasion to speak about this topic, which has garnered a bit of international attention around the world, reaction to the American president's executive order on the weekend. I started getting tweets and texts and emails from constituents, including a lawyer from my riding whose friend was caught up a bit in the net on this.

It is important that the House examine these issues. I do not have a problem with that, but we should examine them from a Canadian perspective. We are not American legislators. We are not its lawmakers. We are not part of the U.S. judiciary. We are not part of the U.S. executive branch. We are Canadian lawmakers, and that should be the focus of our attention.

I myself am an immigrant to this great country, having come here from the U.K. as a young lad with my parents. I can personally attest to the fact that Canada is a country that offers so many blessings, so many rich opportunities for those who desire a better way of life. We all have stories. I have stories from my childhood. I remember as a four-year-old packing up for the trip to Canada. I wanted to take two separate toys but there was only room for one toy in the one piece of luggage we had. I thought I was making a great sacrifice, but of course there are many other examples of much greater sacrifices to get here. To me, that was a lesson that I remember. One sacrifices a lot to come to Canada, but the opportunity to be part of this wonderful country, this wonderful society, is almost invariably worth the sacrifice.

Our country is built on the dreams of indigenous peoples, of course, but also those of many generations of immigrants, many of whom were fleeing oppression. Canada gained a reputation as a welcoming beacon to the world, and it is imperative that we continue to embrace immigrants from all points of the globe, all backgrounds, and all faiths. Of course we make a few demands. They should abide by our laws. They in turn are seeking a better life for themselves and, if applicable, their children. It has been proven time and again that immigration enriches our culture and our economy, and we must never lose sight of that.

The U.S. executive order, as I have already alluded to, is the business of the three branches of the U.S. government. All three of them are involved in this right now, including the judiciary. It does have impacts around the world. Over this past weekend in the immediate aftermath of the executive order, all of us who were fielding phone calls or emails or texts or tweets felt a certain amount of relief to hear that all Canadian passport holders are being exempted from U.S. travel restrictions. I am sure we can all agree that unnecessary disruption to the massive amount of business and travel that occurs daily across our shared border would be devastating.

Canada has always taken seriously its responsibility to monitor and secure our shared border with the United States. We fully understand that we live in a dangerous world and that we must remain vigilant on many fronts. There is no question that the U.S. restrictions prompted confusion and outrage from many quarters. On the plus side, a global conversation has erupted, including here tonight, so that we can examine our own values, our own beliefs, and our own laws.

I was reminded when this debate started that Canada and the U.S. together need to safeguard ISIS-persecuted groups, safeguard them from slavery, rape, genocide. This includes the Yazidis, the Assyrians, the Christians, and the Muslims, of course.

● (2215)

Conservatives have asked the Liberal government to expedite Yazidi refugees to Canada. I must say that we have not had an appropriate response to date.

I travelled to the refugee camps in Iraq last summer. I heard firsthand from witnesses about the brutal treatment of religious minorities at the hands of ISIS. Spending three days on the ground in the region, I heard the horrific stories of mass murder, women and

children being sold into slavery, raped, and tortured, and neighbour being forced against neighbour. It is truly a nightmare.

I met with local government leaders, including the speaker of the Kurdistan house of parliament, who welcomed the attention and asked for our support. I was profoundly struck by the resiliency and unwavering faith of the Yazidi people, the minority Christians, and Syrian Muslims. However, there is a resounding sense of deep despair in the face of the ongoing slaughter in those areas still controlled by ISIS, and we must do more. We must do all we can to restore hope to these persecuted minorities and offer them a chance for a better way of life.

Bringing Yazidi victims to Canada should be a priority for the government, but inexplicably, the heels keep dragging. The government committed last October to acting within 120 days, and that time runs out on February 22. When will we see the plan?

This is a good opportunity to review the government track record as well. This includes ongoing problems with successfully integrating Syrian refugees, making sure they have the proper resources and ongoing supports to succeed in their new homes. These are serious concerns. Canadians are generous people. We know that. Through the privately sponsored refugee program, Canadians opened up their hearts and communities, but too many groups and refugees have been left in the lurch by red tape and bureaucracy.

Conservatives call on the Liberal government to live up to its promises. I think we can all agree in the House that, while being vigilant, Canada must remain a compassionate nation when it comes to immigration. It is my sincere hope that the government will do all it can in this regard, including on the dire need to shelter ISIS-persecuted minorities, and work with our allies around the world to keep our citizens and communities safe.

● (2220)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned refugees left in the lurch. My community of Beaches—East York asked me to attend tonight and call on the government to put actions behind its words.

I would note that, in the election, President Trump promised a Muslim ban that was fearmongering and discriminatory. The travel ban implemented by executive order is not nearly as sweeping, but it is also fearmongering and discriminatory. The swift dismissal of attorney general Yates raises other concerns. A senator in the other House suggested there are thousands of refugees who will be left in the lurch by the 120-day travel ban, and Canada, working with international partners, can perhaps step up to help these thousands of refugees find homes.

I wonder if the Conservative member would support such an initiative.

Hon. Tony Clement: I would, Madam Speaker. I would support that initiative. I have to add the caveat, particularly as public safety critic, that it all has to be within the bounds of Canadian law and, of course, we have to do the usual vetting that we always do when it comes to refugee claimants, which we do for every single refugee claimant.

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I would say that would be a good endeavour, but today in question period in the House of Commons, when this very question was asked of the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, he made it very clear that was not something the government was contemplating. I join the hon. member in sorrow that the question was answered in that particular way and hope that the government reconsiders.

• (2225)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member, who is the foreign affairs critic for the Conservative Party, talked to us about his experience in refugee camps in Iraq. I would like to ask him whether, as Canadians, we should be worried about the impact of this executive order on our national defence. After all, we are collaborating with the United States. Senator McCain said that perhaps banning Iraqis from coming to the United States would constitute a “self-inflicted wound” that would radicalize those people and say to them that they are not welcome, that their citizens are banned from the United States.

Therefore, through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask this question. As we collaborate in trying to address the ISIS crisis, should Canada have a concern that this will make things worse, not better, for our security?

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I have already said publicly that in examining this executive order, I found it strangely overreaching and under-reaching at the same time. It is overreaching, because it casts the net so wide that people who have nothing to do with terrorism or a threat to American security, such as translators in Iraq or other countries, are caught up in this web. Anti-government dissidents who loathe the theocratic government of Iran are caught up in this net. It under-reaches because countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, where we might have some additional concerns, are not part of this executive order.

However, I can assure the hon. member that we can spend every day for the next four years debating U.S. policy, as our constituents are doing every day as well. Of course, we will have opinions, but at the end of the day, we are here for Canadians in Canada. We have to make sure that we have the right security for our citizens but that we also cherish the rights and freedoms we have here. That is my focus as the public safety critic.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Essex.

I wish to begin by invoking the imagery of the Statue of Liberty, that beautiful colossus, the embodiment of freedom holding liberty's torch high into the sky. It is her silhouette in the distance that has greeted millions of the world's huddled masses as they have arrived by ship to freedom's shores in the United States. Designed by La Frédéric Bartholdi in the 1870s, it was a gift from the people of France to the United States in 1886. Her full name is La Liberté Éclairant Le Monde, Liberty Enlightening the World. At her feet lie broken chains.

To mount her upon a pedestal in New York Harbor, New York's business barons were turned to for funding. The fundraising ended unsuccessfully. Then Joseph Pulitzer, of the *New York World*, started a drive for donations in his newspaper. Over 120,000 average Americans responded, most giving less than a dollar.

The statue's completion was celebrated by hundreds of thousands at New York's first tickertape parade and a dedication ceremony presided over by President Grover Cleveland. On the pedestal are inscribed the words, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”, an inscription that became an American canon, which for generations millions of children born into freedom have memorized. It is a canon Canadians share.

This week, Americans gathered in the hundreds of thousands, not in celebration at American ports of entry but in protest. Tens of thousands of Canadians have stood in solidarity. Our Prime Minister, invoking the spirit of the inscription at the base of the Statue of Liberty, tweeted, “To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada”.

Let us be clear. The U.S. presidential order contravenes foundational principles of liberal democracy, equality, religious freedom, and the support and compassion with which we have reached out to those suffering political tyranny and religious persecution. It plays into and mirrors Daesh's and al Qaeda's narrative that there is no place for Muslims in the liberal democratic west.

The presidential decree targets seven Muslim countries while exempting their Christian and non-Muslim minorities. The hardest hit are refugees from Syria. They face an indefinite ban. They are also among the greatest suffering and most vulnerable refugees on the planet. They have escaped Bashar al-Assad's regime, which had, by February 2012, five years ago, when it was last documented, killed more than 500 children, arrested and brutally tortured another 400 children, and regularly dropped chemical barrel bombs on opposition neighbourhoods. Other Syrians have escaped the Daesh death cult with its perverse public executions and ethnic genocides. Still others have escaped cities such as Aleppo, where Putin's air force has blanket-bombed civilian areas while specifically targeting schools, hospitals, markets, and bakeries, leaving cities in decimated ruins.

It is as if Assad, Daesh, and Putin have opened up the gates of hell in Syria. In the last six years, 400,000 Syrian civilians have been killed. Today there are 7.6 million internally displaced Syrians and 4.8 million Syrian refugees. Out of a population of 23 million, 13 million are either dead or displaced. It is these tired, poor, huddled masses for whom the hope represented by the flame burning in the Statue of Liberty's torch has been extinguished.

• (2230)

To those despairing that a rising tide of nativism and xenophobia in Liberal democracies is washing across Canada's borders, I point out that in Canada, the Prime Minister has appointed a new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. At the age of 16, the minister arrived in our welcoming country as a refugee from one of the seven banned Muslim countries, Somalia.

Our newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs is the daughter of a mother born in a displaced persons camp for Ukrainians.

Our newly appointed Minister of Democratic Institutions is the granddaughter of Jewish displaced persons, Holocaust survivors.

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As the son and grandson of refugees who arrived in Canada following the conclusion of World War II, it was with immense pride that I watched the Prime Minister and these new ministers during their swearing in ceremony three weeks ago. However, it was not just a personally poignant moment. It was a reaffirmation that Canada will stand as a beacon for those huddled masses seeking refuge, sanctuary, and belief in the universal values of *liberté, fraternité, and égalité* of humankind.

This past week, Canada's sanctity, this promise of sanctuary and respect for those seeking Canada's freedom, freedom to worship, freedom from hate-fuelled violence, has been horrifically desecrated. In a place of worship during evening prayers, innocents were gunned down, killed solely because of their Muslim faith.

Alexandre Bissonnette had drunk from that dark chalice of fear and hatred proffered by those equating Muslims with security threats. The threat we face domestically is not from our Muslim brothers and sisters in Canada. It is from those whose minds have been poisoned by the peddlers of discriminatory fear, hatred, and its consequential violence.

It is time to clearly and unequivocally restate our values. As the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship underscored earlier today, I can tell the House what our principles are. Our principles are openness—open to ideas, open to people, open to those who want to come here and make a better life for themselves—and to continue to have compassion for those who seek sanctuary in our country.

It is further reaffirmed by the welcome Canada gave to over 46,000 refugees last year, of whom over 35,000 were Syrians, and by the generosity of the tens of thousands of Canadians who not only welcomed but privately sponsored over 16,000 Syrian refugees.

It is reaffirmed by our commitment to increase our immigration levels to over 300,000 in 2017, with a new base line of 300,000. It is reaffirmed by our commitment to bring 40,000 refugees and protected persons into Canada in 2017, twice the levels of past years, refugees from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, and Libya. It is reaffirmed by our current government's commitments and informed by our history.

Since World War II, more than one million refugees have come to call Canada home, from Europe, from Asia, from Africa, from the Middle East, refugees of every ethnicity and every religion. Although separated by oceans from the old world, we welcomed one in 10 refugees resettled worldwide.

I began my remarks by invoking the imagery and legacy of the Statue of Liberty and the story of the United States. For more than a century, the torch of the Statue of Liberty has shone brightly, a beacon for the disposed, the stateless, and the unwanted. In 1984, in the lead-up to the Statue of Liberty's centenary, UNESCO designated it a world heritage site, stating that it is "a masterpiece of the human spirit... She endures as a highly potent symbol...of ideals such as liberty, peace, human rights, abolition of slavery, democracy, and opportunity".

Today, nativism, xenophobia, walls, and a presidential decree banning Muslim refugees has cast a pall. However, the ideal

symbolized by the Statue of Liberty will prevail over this temporary darkness.

• (2235)

In the meantime, Canada must be the city upon the hill that inspires the world and serves as a beacon to those seeking refuge, the tired, huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard from government members who said they trust the minister to make the right decision about the suspension of the safe third country agreement.

The reality is there are scores of people who are crossing by foot, trekking through snow in -12°C temperatures to seek safety at the Canadian border. They are forced to do this illegally because of this agreement. They are risking life and limb.

The member talked about freedom for the huddled masses, for the poor, and those who need shelter. As the Prime Minister tweets to say that Canada is open, and welcome to Canada, why on earth would we not suspend this provision? Why would we not do that?

I know the member is very progressive in his beliefs in this area. Would the member advocate that his government do exactly that, immediately lift the safe third country agreement?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing forward the motion for an emergency debate, and for the passion and commitment she brings to refugees.

As of today, the asylum system in the United States has not changed, as far as we know, and is meeting the conditions of the agreement. Our government will continue to monitor and to assess the situation.

As the member said, yes, I have full confidence in our new minister. I have full confidence that Canada, as we did last year with the Syrian refugees and as we are doing currently with the Yazidi refugees, will do the right thing.

• (2240)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have been delinquent in not profoundly thanking the member for Vancouver East for bringing forward this emergency debate tonight.

The nature of the Safe Third Country Agreement is explained in the open letter that has been referred to many times this evening, and that is:

Canada's immigration legislation indicates that, in determining whether a country should be designated as "safe" for refugees, consideration must be given to the country's human rights record and to whether the country complies with the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Convention against Torture.

This letter, signed by eminent jurists, law professors, concludes that currently the executive orders the president has made, combined with his musing that torture works, they say:

We also note that they are inconsistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention Against Torture, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights...

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I know that as things now stand, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has not answered this question. The Minister of Immigration can, as an individual minister, immediately suspend this in order to ensure that no one is trapped, no one is prevented from finding safe haven in Canada if they happen to be in the U.S.

I would ask if the hon. member would consider, and I think there are other hon. members in the Liberal caucus who may agree, that this should be a subject for ongoing debate, and that the government should change its mind.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Mr. Speaker, I fully agree that this is an issue for ongoing debate and in fact it is an issue, as are many of the issues that this presidential decree has raised, that we are seeking clarity on and that we are monitoring very carefully.

As of the present time, the U.S. government continues, as far as we can tell, to meet the conditions of the agreement. That does not mean we are not monitoring. We are monitoring. We are watching and making sure that those conditions are in fact being met.

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to go to resuming debate, but before we do that, I do notice there are many members wishing to participate in the five-minute period for questions and comments. Accordingly, I will do my best to help members guide the length of their interventions to a degree that will allow more members to participate. I am also going to be observing the timelines for speeches more closely, because we are working on a definitive end, that being midnight, so that all the members who are currently on the list will have the opportunity to address the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Essex.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank the Speaker for granting this debate tonight. It is a very important debate.

We all owe deep thanks to my NDP colleague, the member for Vancouver East, for her tireless work on this issue. Indeed, she and I were emailing all weekend long about the impact of this ban in our ridings and in our country. I am proud that we stand here tonight to challenge this ban as a result of an NDP emergency debate. We take this issue incredibly seriously, as it impacts the lives of so many Canadians, indeed all Canadians, because a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

We are here in the House in response to the extraordinary times we find ourselves in. We are here to debate the presidential executive order issued by President Trump prohibiting the travel of all refugees and individuals from seven countries in the Middle East and North Africa. I repeat this because it seems to me that there is some confusion among members of the House as to why we are here and why hundreds of people stood out in the cold tonight to join us in our galleries for this very important debate.

We have to let this sink in for a moment, because prior to Friday, I never imagined we would be watching our closest neighbour and ally descend into such a dark moment, seeing our fellow Canadians and their families who are from one of the seven countries struggling under the weight of this ban, a ban that is nothing short of discrimination against our Muslim brothers and sisters from the seven countries. We are not here to discount the good work that the

government has done to settle refugees in this past year. No one is debating that good work. We are here to discuss action following the very serious recent executive order from President Trump. Canadians must reject any ban that is based on race, religion, or place of birth. This kind of ban promotes hate and intolerance.

In October 2016, the House of Commons unanimously endorsed a motion introduced by the leader of the NDP, the member for Outremont, condemning all forms of Islamophobia. Some 69,742 Canadians signed the petition and are among those who are now calling on us to follow through this very important step with action. They are likely among the hundreds who are sitting right now in our galleries, or who lined up earlier tonight, those who are at home watching us stand up to this discrimination, and the thousands who have flooded us with emails and phone calls since Friday.

I want to give a quote, because tonight, more is being asked of us. It is a quote from my friend, Dr. Maher El-Masri. He is chairperson of the Windsor Islamic Council. He said, "It is no longer enough to denounce Islamophobia. The rise of anti-Islamic sentiment has reached dangerous levels that threaten the very fabric of our society."

This ban will have a disastrous implication for thousands of innocent travellers and refugees. Canada must step up and do its part.

We have heard many members tonight reference their family members, or in their past, people who have gone to fight for this country, to fight for the freedoms we enjoy, those who went and joined the allied forces in World War II in Europe. A debate took place in this very esteemed place where we now sit, and this was not an easy decision, but Canada made a choice to not sit back, but join the fight. We are now being called upon to do our part once again.

My riding of Essex is on the border with the U.S. We are very closely tied to our American friends and neighbours. Canada needs to secure greater assurances for those travelling to the United States who were born in or have dual nationality with one of the seven countries listed.

Our office in Essex has been dealing with a large volume of calls, emails, and messages from constituents, from early Saturday when the very first implications of the ban were taking place at our borders in Windsor and Detroit. Many people have been affected by this ban. Many professionals in our region cross every day to work and to visit family. They feel targeted and uncertain.

In my riding of Essex, and in particular the town of LaSalle, we have many Canadian families and permanent resident holders who were born in one of the seven banned countries.

This weekend, there was a lot of confusion at our border, and the limited information and directions that were given to our local Canadian border agents was not enough. We were notified that the U.S. officials were not providing the Canadian side with definite instructions, and there was confusion about who could cross. Indeed, people were being denied and returned from the U.S. back to Canada.

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• (2245)

Meanwhile, our government was silent. We were searching for answers. We were looking for something. We could not find anything on any of the official government websites. I was up very late on Saturday night with my team in Essex going through these phone calls trying to answer people's questions, calling our CBSA chief in Windsor, calling the U.S. trying to find answers because we simply did not have them. It was extremely frustrating for us and very difficult for those in our region who were directly impacted, because they are dual citizens or permanent residents from one of the seven countries.

It was not until Sunday when I heard the new minister speaking at the press conference and I was pleased to hear the things that he was bringing forward and I was encouraged that we were moving in the right direction. Unfortunately, people were being turned back at our border, so no direction was being given. We listened to the minister in that press conference and today again, and we still have no written agreement with our U.S. partner. We do not know what this ban means. We do not know what they intend to do with it, what countries they intend to look at next. We have not sat down and had formal conversations that are necessary between the two countries to ensure that when people want to cross the border, they can do so confidently because that is not the case right now. People are heading across that border uncertain if they will be able to cross, nervous about whether they will be stopped, whether they will be questioned, what will be asked of them. This is not a situation that we can accept at our Canada border or from one of our greatest allies.

As I said, there was mass confusion and in the span of 24 hours we were flooded with individual emails and phone calls from people who were directly impacted. Canada needs additional measures to offer a safe haven for refugees fleeing violence and persecution and who have been shut out by the United States. We saw this across airports. We saw mass demonstrations at airports across the U.S. because people were being refused or detained. I remember watching a five-year-old who had been detained. I watched two senior citizens in wheelchairs who had been detained, because they were from one of these seven countries. To say that this has not had an impact on people yet, it has impacted people in our closest ally, in our neighbour. It will very soon come to impact people in our own country.

However, I hope that we can implement some of the things that we are bringing forward so that we do not have to have someone be impacted, that we can take the approach of being proactive rather than reactive to discrimination. We have all committed to do better. Our constituents and Canadians deserve that.

What can we do? We can lift the 1,000 application cap on privately sponsored refugees and fast-track refugees whose applications in the U.S. were previously approved. We can list hundreds of successful stories of refugees in my riding. I have heard it from all sides of the House tonight, so why not lift that cap and welcome more people into our country who have already been screened and vetted to the highest degree? We can certainly do so with safety. We should partner with our international partners to ensure that this happens. We have private groups that are ready and willing for this to happen.

The government must immediately suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement with the United States as we can no longer have confidence that the U.S. provides a safe haven for refugees. The member for Vancouver East has pointed this out repeatedly. This can be done immediately. I have yet to hear a commitment from the government to suspend the agreement to protect the most vulnerable who are caught in this web. These are dark days and we cannot turn our eyes away and pretend that this will not impact us.

In Windsor Essex, as I said, we are very close to our U.S. neighbours and we must stand up for everyone. I want to read a message that I received from one of my constituents: "This discrimination should not go silent. Canada should be a voice for the voiceless. Also grant entry to those that have already received the rigorous vetting and should come to Canada. Please, like so many Canadians, we call for humanity to come back".

This is the call of Canadians tonight and there are actions that can take place above and beyond what the minister has mentioned so far. Again, we need to push further. This is who we are as a country. We do not sit back and watch this happen to our closest neighbour, to our friends and family. We stand up and say that we defy this ban. It is discriminatory and we will not accept it.

• (2250)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are over 60 million displaced people in the world today. The NDP has called for more refugees to be admitted into Canada. What is the number the NDP wants to bring into Canada?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, we need to work with the international community. We need to step up to do our part. We have seen the great benefits. Many of us in this very room are descendants of refugees and immigrants. We cannot stand by and watch as people have no place to go. They are being denied by our closest neighbour.

Therefore, a number at this point cannot be attached and should not be attached. Is there ever a number that we reach where we say we have done enough? There is always more to do. Canada is always willing to step up to do more.

However, there is one thing we can do. Private sponsors who have money to bring in and support refugees should be allowed to do so. Get rid of the cap of 1,000 people because that cap is already gone. Canadians are generous. They have big hearts. They are opening up their wallets to help others. We should allow them to—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would briefly like to respond to some of the comments made by my friend from London. He does not seem to recall that many of the first refugees who were brought in by the present government had been approved under the previous government. I think he knows that.

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I want to comment as well on the question of numbers because the real issue is the cap on private sponsors.

Why would we not allow refugees to come in under the private sponsorship stream when we know these people will have the support of existing communities, people in Canada who want to help and work with them to provide them with support, as well as to support them in the transitioning to being in Canada? Does it not make sense that we take full advantage of the private sponsorship stream when it is available? That seems advantageous to refugees, as well as to taxpayers, as well as from an integration perspective.

• (2255)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. We should lift the cap.

If we have groups of five or if we have private individuals who are willing to put forward the money to sponsor and support new refugees coming to Canada, we absolutely should create a stream for them to do that. There should not be a cap on anyone who is willing to reach out beyond his or her own circumstance to help someone else. This is what and who we are.

This cap needs to be lifted. We need a strong, firm commitment from the government that it will lift the cap and allow privately sponsored refugees to enter our country, in particular, those who are being turned back at the American border. This goes along with the adoption of the safe third country if we do not do something about this issue. Are we waiting for someone to be impacted? Is that what we are doing? Are sitting back and waiting until the first person is denied, the first person is discriminated against, before we step in? We can step in right now, and we should.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the issue of the so-called cap on privately sponsored refugees currently in place. I am speaking strictly in my capacity as a member from Quebec. As the minister explained so well, with regard to groups of five, the Quebec immigration minister placed a cap on this type of sponsorship due to logistics. The Government of Quebec cannot process these applications at this time. It is having a great deal of difficulty processing current applications. It is strictly a matter of logistics. It is not up to the federal government to impose this on Quebec.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, my riding has one of the largest Syrian Canadian populations in Canada. We have embraced and opened our doors and communities to the Syrian refugees who have settled. In fact, other Syrian refugees are leaving other places in Canada to come to Windsor—Essex because of the success we have had. Therefore, we have our doors wide open. It should not be that the group of five has a limit.

There should not be a cap on any private stream of refugee support. The cap should simply not exist if people are willing to put the money forward. The group of five is simply people who cannot afford to do it on their own, so they should be able to come together to do that. There should not be a limit. For one person to be a single private sponsor is more difficult and there are fewer people in our country who can do that than the group of five method. Therefore, we should allow that.

If provinces have particular issues or communities that, for whatever reason, are unable to accept more, that is a different conversation. However, lifting the cap nationally is important.

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

In my Ottawa office I have a large portrait of Clemens August Graf von Galen, Catholic Bishop of Münster in Germany from 1933 until 1946. My grandmother lived in Münster during that period and, as a Jewish child, she attributed her survival to the courageous witness of von Galen, whose anti-Nazi sermons created a climate of resistance against the Nazis, a climate in which a child considered undesirable could find refuge.

However, what was striking about von Galen was his steadfast refusal to be a partisan of any side. When the allied military government took over Münster, allied staff were eager to meet with this anti-Nazi bishop whose fame had by then spread throughout the world. However, they quickly became frustrated by the fact that von Galen vigorously denounced what he perceived to be unjust actions of the allied military governments. He strongly opposed the idea of collective German guilt and the forceable removal of German speakers from other countries in eastern Europe. After visiting Rome to be named a cardinal, von Galen visited prisoner of war camps holding Germans in southern Italy and offered to bring messages back to the family members of these prisoners.

Von Galen never would have denied the far greater injustice of Nazi rule, but he understood a moral responsibility to speak out against injustices in all places and in all of its forms. His fight against injustice was not a partisan fight. He protested the injustices of his own people and of other peoples. He would have strongly rejected false moral equivalency, but he also rejected the idea that being on the right side of history was sufficient to justify any abuse. He believed in calling out injustice in every case.

Today, we have a similar obligation, and that is to clearly and forcefully call out injustice. A frank recognition of the injustice represented by the recent executive order in the United States is not to deny the existence of other injustices and the need to say more about them.

Indeed, the Muslim community in Burma faces ethnic cleansing. Muslims in China, along with Christians, Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners, and others face persecution far more brutal than anything imagined by the Trump administration. Suppression of religious freedom in Russia and in Russian occupied Ukraine is now being ignored as both Canada and the U.S. rush toward closer relations with Russia.

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The government has yet to act on the ongoing genocide against Yazidis and Assyrian Christians. Christians, Baha'is, and other minorities, including Muslim minorities facing systematic persecution throughout the Middle East and beyond. In fact, in most of the seven countries identified in this executive order, converting from Islam to a different faith is not only illegal but carries a death sentence. Jews are not able to travel to many Middle Eastern countries. Saudi Arabia does not even permit the practice of faiths other than Islam.

The world is seething with injustice and there is rich hypocrisy in the condemnation of this executive order by those who endorse or remain silent about so many other and certainly greater injustices. But the recognition of the existence of worse injustices in no way should derogate from the necessary insistence that the injustice of this executive order ought to be remedied.

Why is this order unjust? This executive order arbitrarily prohibits all people from certain countries from entering the United States, even those already granted status, regardless of their values, their motivations, their religion, or even whether they are a security threat. It is therefore not strictly speaking a Muslim ban as President Trump had initially proposed, but it does sadly prohibit people of all religious traditions from the countries in question, including many persecuted Muslims and other persecuted minorities.

Although the President has a prudential obligation to defend American security, this order is blatantly imprudent in that it arbitrarily discriminates on the basis of national origin, while turning a blind eye to any serious factor indicative of security concerns. This order is unjust precisely because it fails to discriminate between those who may be a security threat on the one hand and those who simply come from certain nationalities on the other. It bars escaping minorities from the countries named and it does not bar the entry of anyone from other countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Qatar, which happen to have been the source of all of the 9/11 hijackers.

This order discriminates on the basis of national origin, while applying no additional security filters to immigrants from other countries. It therefore discriminates without advancing any discernible objectives.

Let us be clear. I do not know if I speak for all members of the House in this sense, but I do not believe in open borders. I believe nations have a right, generally speaking, to defend their borders, to determine their immigration levels, and to screen those whom they may eventually admit. We would not be having this discussion if the American administration had instead sought to enhance vetting procedures which are universally applied.

• (2300)

In our discussions about human rights and about immigration, we must reject false choices. We do not have to choose between calling out injustice in the Muslim world and calling out injustice in the west. We can and must do both. We do not have to choose between open-borders naïveté on the one hand and unjust ineffective policies on the other. We can instead seek to more robustly and directly go after the sources of radicalization while welcoming as many peace-seeking victims of that terror as possible.

Clemens von Galen was a Christian motivated by his faith to seek justice for all, not just for members of his own community. Americans and American conservatives in particular highlight the Christian identity of their nation. Let us therefore underscore that Christianity is not a tribe; it is a creed.

From one of the most seminal texts in the Christian tradition I will read the following:

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

And of course the passage continues.

This is not a call to naïveté. It does not negate the injunction of Christ to be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves. However, this executive order is neither. It is as wise as a goldfish and appears as innocent as a crocodile. It combines an odd naïveté with every appearance of malevolence. Pushing more frustrated Muslims into the arms of radicals while denying any hope to those desperate to escape will make America less safe, not more.

Christianity is a creed, not a tribe. Similarly, America is a creed, not a tribe. Its creed is its constitution.

As a Canadian, I do believe that Canada is the best country in the world, but I am not embarrassed to speak of the exceptional nature of its republic, indisputably one of the greatest national forces for freedom in human history. It is the idea of America that makes America great. It is the idea of America that will make America great again. That idea, not all that dissimilar from our founding idea, is of a multi-ethnic, religiously diverse society founded on shared values, the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, equality of opportunity, and the rule of law.

Why are we having this emergency debate in this place about an American government policy, when there are admittedly greater injustices in other parts of the world? I believe it is because we all acknowledge the exceptional importance of the United States remaining true to its founding creed and values.

Who among the major powers has the will and the capacity to be a force for justice in a world of rampant injustice? It is not China, not Russia, but only the U.S. in collaboration with a community of nations dedicated to standing for and testifying to our shared values.

The president said in his inaugural address, "We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example. We will shine for everyone to follow". That sounds as if it would be a very good idea.

Christianity is a creed, not a tribe. America is a creed, not a tribe. Conservatism is a creed, not a tribe.

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Conservatives believe in facing the hard-nosed realities of the world with seriousness and without naïveté. Conservatives believe in sacrifice. Conservatives believe in universal human dignity and in equal opportunity. Conservatives believe in the rule of law in keeping with a constitutional framework that limits executive power. Conservatives believe in reasoned compassion and in ordered liberty. Conservatives believe that families, communities, and individuals should be able to act in accordance with their natural competencies without the interference of the state. Conservatives believe in religious freedom and in the limits of state power. Conservatives believe in the importance of national security.

Because it is unjust in its imprudence and arbitrariness, because it denies equality of opportunity and universal human dignity, because it is likely unconstitutional because it lacks compassion and invites disorder, because it is an overreach of state power to bar people who already have status from going into the United States, and because it will make America less safe, this executive order is not conservative.

While we implore our American brothers and sisters on this critical question of justice, let us also rededicate ourselves to building a better society here in Canada, one founded on justice, on reasoned compassion, on ordered liberty, and on the pursuit of greater unity in the midst of proud diversity.

In my remaining time I would like to read a quote from Ronald Reagan's farewell address. He said:

The past few days when I've been at that window upstairs, I've thought a bit of the "shining city upon a hill." The phrase comes from John Winthrop, who wrote it to describe the America he imagined. What he imagined was important because he was an early Pilgrim, an early freedom man. He journeyed here on what today we'd call a little wooden boat; and like the other Pilgrims, he was looking for a home that would be free.

• (2305)

I've spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don't know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, windswept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That's how I saw it, and see it still.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, as I have mentioned, I have received many phone calls and emails from my constituents, who have expressed concerns about the safe third country agreement. Primarily, what they are telling me is that they want to make sure that Canada remains a welcoming place and that we fulfill our obligations to welcome people to our country.

I would like to ask if my colleague is ready to stand up to people who say that our borders should be screened for Canadian values in a restrictive sense to make sure that Canada remains a welcoming country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I would be tempted to take this opportunity to talk about my choice for the leadership of the Conservative Party in light maybe of what that question imagines. He will do a great job, let me say, but I would not want to go too far down that road.

Let me just say, with respect to Canada fulfilling its obligations, that one of the things that has been touched on throughout the debate tonight is the issue of the Yazidi people. A motion passed in the

House. There was debate at that time about the nature of that motion, but, in the end, that motion passed unanimously. It was a commitment in the House to welcome Yazidi people specifically, recognizing the unique victimization that has gone on there as a result of the genocide that has happened to them.

I hope that we will continue to welcome newcomers from all parts of the world and that that will include responding to the motion of the House with respect to Yazidis.

• (2310)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a very simple question. The member spoke about Conservative values, Christian values, and, of course, we have heard a lot tonight about Canadian values and our place in the world.

My question is this. In his judgment, would it be useful for the Prime Minister to not simply talk about those values of diversity, which we are all so proud of, but to offer an opinion about the suspension of the American participation in the humanitarian operation and the effect that this executive order will have not only on the U.S. and Canada but on the world? Does the Prime Minister have an obligation to speak up on this matter?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, we know the Prime Minister has talked in general terms about the value of diversity and I think when he says that, he expresses values that we all share. However, there is a question of what the next steps are.

As a member of Parliament, I have not had a problem saying I have grave concerns. It was clearly in a positive, optimistic spirit, not an anti-American spirit at all. I disagree fundamentally with this decision. Yet members of the government, generally speaking, with some notable exceptions, have not been willing to say that. That is a question for them to answer in terms of what is going on.

I do not think there is a problem with clearly expressing our opinion with respect to the issue in a way, again, that is positive and respectful of the relationship. Those disagreements can be mentioned in a way that is respectful.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke of the unjust executive order. I certainly agree with that assessment. I would just ask the member how we ought to respond to the consequences of that unjust order. Senator Omidvar suggested Canada should work with our international allies and help refugees who are left in the lurch as a result of the 120-day ban. I wonder what the member has to say to that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I think we have been very clear and concrete about this. There seems to be an agreement among the opposition parties that lifting the cap for private sponsorship is one very simple, very sensible step that would make a difference. We should certainly engage in conversation about other options in that context, but that is something very clear and specific that could come out of this conversation.

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Again, I have spoken before, as well as others, about the benefits of private sponsorship as a model. It is really a way of communities being personally engaged in the process of welcoming refugees and the kind of solution that I am quite partial to that involves, of course, the co-operation of government, but also individuals being part of that kind of vital activity. That would be one particular concrete step that would make a big difference.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking my NDP colleague from Vancouver East for taking the initiative to bring this debate to the House. I also thank the Speaker for granting that request.

It is a timely issue. We are here to discuss the recent executive order by President Trump essentially banning the travel of individuals who come from seven particular countries explicitly based on their place of birth and implicitly because of their race or religion. This debate is an opportunity to stand up and say that we reject policies that target people based on their race, religion, and place of birth. It is a matter of principle. It is also a matter of pragmatism.

We are living in a challenging time. I was in my grade 12 year when the attack on the World Trade towers occurred. It has been a feature of my adult life that there is a sense of fear about terrorism in the world. There have been many debates over the last 15 or 16 years about how the west should respond to those threats. We are living in a time when people are fearful for their jobs and being able to feed their families. In times when there is that fear, we have certainly had political leaders who have played on and tried to ramp up those fears. As that has increased, what would otherwise be legitimate debates about immigration policy, such as how many people should we admit per year, how many refugees should we bring in, what kind of supports we need to provide for them, what are our economic goals, suddenly take on a different tone.

I think part of why we saw so many people show up in the gallery tonight for this debate, why we saw so many people show up for the women's marches on January 21, the day after President Trump's inauguration, and why we saw so many people come out for the vigils last night in response to the terrible shooting in Quebec on Sunday night, is that people are starting to feel that we are at a moment when we witness government or other political leaders playing on those fears and starting to adopt policies that manifest those fears and ruin lives, it is not enough to stand by and just say, as one of the government members said earlier today on the radio, to keep calm and carry on. People are feeling like that momentum has been building for a long time, as political leaders play on those fears for their own reasons, and we are at the point now where we need to stand up and say that enough is enough.

When it is getting to the point that the new President of the United States feels that he can tell people that they are not allowed in a country that has been a beacon of freedom for the world for a very long time based on where they are from explicitly and implicitly because of their religion or their race, it is not enough just to stand by anymore. We need to say no. We need to make it clear that we do not accept that. That is not the world we want to live in. That is not the world I want for my children. We are moving past the point where we say that this individual is a threat, and we have reasons and intelligence for thinking that we need to say no to this particular

person coming across our border, to the point where we are starting to say that because these people are simply part of that class of people and come from a certain part of the world, we will not engage with them anymore. There is something wrong with that.

I am from Manitoba. We have had various waves of immigration. One was a Mennonite wave of immigration that came out of the Soviet Union. They were people who were fleeing that government. If we had had the same approach, because the Soviet Union was an enemy of Canada, those people would not have been allowed in because they were coming from the Soviet Union, yet they were people in that part of the world who were being oppressed and who came to Canada to escape that regime. They agreed with Canada that they did not want to see governments behaving in that way. They did not agree with their leadership and wanted to get out.

We have only to look at that and make the comparison to know that this is a terribly misguided policy. To say no to the very people who are fleeing the kind of leadership that we would want to criticize because it does not promote the kinds of freedoms and peaceful living that we believe are important is a terrible mistake. It is a mistake in principle, but it is also a mistake from the point of view of achieving real safety and security for people of the world. This is a bad policy because it inflames the very kinds of tensions that are leading people to want to make war on us, whether in Canada or the United States. That is the importance of this debate.

● (2315)

We have heard a number of people say that we need to resist having a kind of false debate about having totally open borders on the one hand and totally closed borders on the other hand, and that is true. If we put two straw men up against one another in an argument, we are not going to ever get at the truth, because that is not what straw men are designed to do.

We also need to be able to call out when the debate is going well beyond reasonable differences and is starting to inflame those tensions. I mean, we are living in a time when we have a President of the United States who is quite comfortable having his spokespeople go out and say that they have "alternative facts". The truth does not really matter. I think that is what people are starting to respond to.

I think what we are seeing in these marches are people saying that they have been putting up with that degradation of public debate for a long time, but what is going on now is just wrong. The United States of America has crossed the line between saying that it is concerned about particular individuals and is profiling them and everything else and is taking action, to saying that if one comes from a certain country, forget it. The United States is saying that it does not care about what one believes or why one is trying to leave a country or would want to come to the United States.

That kind of insensitivity to the truth and to people who want to work with them to build a better world is a surefire way to get exactly the opposite of what the United States wants. That is why this kind of policy is wrong. I think it is why Canadians and people the world over have been so concerned and are saying no.

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We have seen examples of this kind of attitude taking over in the past, and the results have never been good. We have a long list of embarrassments in Canada. We have succumbed to that attitude, whether it was when we interned Ukrainian Canadians during the First World War, when we interned Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, or when we said no to Jews after the Second World War who wanted to come and settle here in Canada because they did not feel safe at home. These are embarrassments in our history, and it is painful to watch the United States getting to a point where it is going to have a lot to apologize for.

We hope that one day, when Americans give their heads a shake and get a government that can look at what is happening now, they will say that this is not who or what we are and this is not how to build the kind of world we ultimately want.

In this debate, we have been looking to the government to stand up and join with Canadians in saying that enough is enough. We cannot tolerate this idea of alternative facts. They are starting to create policies that are going to lead to a far more dangerous world and are moving in the wrong direction.

One way the government can do that is by taking some concrete action. That is why we have said that if the Liberals want to show that they are on board with all those Canadians who are saying no to this, they could lift the cap on the private sponsorship of refugees. There are a lot of Canadians who want to sponsor refugees, whether they are coming from the United States, because they are no longer permitted, or from other parts of the world. Let Canadians open their arms and provide that generosity.

It is tough to say to our friends that they have crossed the line, but that is when it is most important to have friends who can say that. Suspending the safe third country agreement is the way to do that. That is the way to send that signal.

Another way we can do that is by fast-tracking some of those refugees who have already been cleared by the U.S. government to come to the United States, a country with the best intelligence in the world, and telling them that they are welcome here.

● (2320)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a time where there has been some confusion, fear among Canadians, and frustration as well, I think we can look to the leadership of our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for the calm and sensible leadership that he has provided, ensuring that Canadians receive the information they need as this fluid situation moves along.

At the same time, our Prime Minister our Minister of Foreign Affairs, our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and many other members of the government caucus and members on all sides of the floor have stayed level-headed in ensuring that we do our best to ensure that Canadians get that proper information, and at the same time that we espouse the values that we all adhere to, values of inclusion, values of respect for pluralism and diversity and of equal human dignity.

Would the member opposite not agree that it is important to act in such a way when Canadians are wrought with some level of confusion and frustration?

● (2325)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I always say it is important to keep a level head, but sometimes we have to do that even while we are saying that something is wrong. I think that is the added message that the government needs to be sending to its counterpart in the United States, that this policy is wrong. It is wrong in principle and it is something we do not agree with. It is something we are sad to see our friend and closest ally adopt.

I think what Canadians want to hear from their government as well is it telling the American administration it is wrong because it will not lead to a safer world. Someone has to deliver that message, and who best but America's closest friend and ally to say that we share the same goals in terms of safety and security, but this is the wrong way to do it and America needs to reverse it.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to add that the people from the farthest riding from Ottawa, Yukon, share the same compassion for refugees through Yukon Cares, the shock and sadness of the executive order, and the horror of the tragedy in Quebec City through a well-attended vigil in Whitehorse.

Yukoners wrote emails. They want to ensure that the response to being turned away, that Canada is generous in the number of refugees that we allow this year, including more than 1,000 privately sponsored refugees, that we help in any way we can, including any needed program changes, and that we evaluate any international agreement to which we are signatory that disadvantages refugees in the United States.

I am proud the Yukoners are showing the same level of love and compassion and generosity as all Canadians.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that people in Yukon are on board, and I am willing to bet that at least some of them would like to see the government go further in terms of not just carrying on, on a kind of parallel track, but actually challenging our friend and closest ally to bring out the best in themselves. That is not what is happening right now, and that is why I think members of the government need to go further.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring a message from the people of Courtenay—Alberni. They would also like to offer their condolences to the victims' families and the community that was hit so hard by this tragedy.

The member talked about the important relationship with the United States and the important role we play. When one of our community members steps out of line or does something that is against the values in our community, they count on their friends to stand up and make sure they understand that they have crossed the line.

Our best friends have crossed the line. It is our duty. If we cannot count on our best friends to let us know we have done something that is out of line, then who can we count on?

Obama says the world needs more Canada. Canadians reject any ban that is based on race, religion, or place of birth or promotes hate and intolerance. Canada must do its part to step up.

I ask the member to talk about that important obligation we have as neighbours, as friends, to our allies.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague said it very well. This is the time where friendship, if it counts for anything, needs to come to the fore. This is the time when we need to be able to have that difficult conversation.

We really are reaching a point, and it has been a long time now, that this particular way of doing politics has been on the rise, and we need to nip it in the bud before it gets any further out of control. We will not do that without a conversation.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Fredericton.

Much like other members here, I would like to take a moment to honour the victims of this weekend's attack. Cowardly hate crimes such as the one we witnessed in Quebec City on Sunday have no place in our society. Indeed, an attack on any community should be deemed an attack on all. Canadians were very disturbed by the developments. Values we cherish were obviously trampled on.

I stand with my colleagues in solidarity with the Muslim community and with peace-loving Canadians of all backgrounds. It is in that spirit I would like to approach tonight's significant debate.

It is an honour to rise today to participate in this emergency debate. As everyone in this esteemed House is abundantly aware, debates of this nature are relatively rare, reserved for matters of state requiring the urgent and undivided attention of all members. Before I continue, I would like to thank all members of this House for participating in tonight's debate. I would also like to thank the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for his leadership on this file. I have had the pleasure of working with the minister in the past and have no doubt that he will serve his new position admirably and with great distinction.

Our government has no more sacred duty than to protect both the safety of Canadian citizens and the values we hold dear during times of great uncertainty. It is a challenge we as a country have met time and time again, and one that we will continue to embrace with courage and conviction.

We understand that the recent executive order issued by the United States has jarred many Canadians. Over the past several days, my office has been inundated with emails and phone calls from concerned individuals. Our message to them is clear. While this situation is continuously evolving, senior government officials have been working around the clock to seek clarity for Canadians from the White House, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Our government's actions in response to the executive order have been timely and comprehensive. The Prime Minister's office has been in frequent contact with senior White House officials. Our national security adviser, Daniel Jean, has been in contact with U.S. national security adviser, Michael Flynn, and officials at our

embassy in Washington, D.C. continue to engage with their counterparts to clarify the ambit of the executive order and its consequences.

This debate holds special significance to me for a number of reasons. First, I have lived, studied, and worked in the United States, and continue to have family and many close friends who are proud to call America home. As we navigate this new era, they are never far from my thoughts. I know first-hand how immigrants have shaped and enhanced America. I must admit that the America we see reflected in the recent executive order is not the one that I know.

However, I have great faith in the institutions of our neighbours to the south. In recent days, we have seen ordinary American citizens, civil society groups, the attorneys general of numerous states and community and business leaders mobilize in response to this executive order. I believe their common sense and legal concerns will prevail.

Second, as the member of Parliament for one of Canada's most diverse ridings, I am well aware of the concerns facing many Canadians at this troubling time. To that end, our government has confirmed that Canadian dual nationals are not affected by the recent executive order regarding travel and immigration to the United States. Canadian permanent residents with a valid Canadian PR card, visa, and passport, including permanent residents from the seven source countries outlined in the executive order, can still enter the United States.

However, we are aware that the executive order does apply to individuals from the seven countries transiting through Canada. To that end, our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has assured anyone stranded in Canada that our government will provide temporary residency and status to such individuals.

Finally, in regard to Canada's safe third country agreement with the U.S., it should be noted that exceptions already exist for those who have family members in Canada and unaccompanied minors. The objective of the agreement is to strengthen the integrity of our refugee systems, and to share responsibility for providing protection to those in need. All eligible asylum claimants will continue to get a fair hearing by the Immigration and Refugee Board.

● (2330)

As this situation evolves, our government will continue to provide Canadians with relevant information and administrative support in a timely and transparent manner.

The third reason I am concerned is that I feel compelled to address the issue before us today as an immigrant myself. I understand the vital role and contributions that immigrants make to our great country.

Many tens of thousands of dual Canadian citizens hold citizenship in one of the countries identified by the executive order, including many in my riding of Willowdale. Those Canadians can rest assured that we understand their concerns and will do all we possibly can.

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Countless Canadians have expressed their views on this executive order. It is important they recognize that our government will continue to ensure that our immigration system remains compassionate, inclusive, and efficient, while also protecting the health, safety, and security of all Canadians.

Canadians are rightly proud of our rich history of welcoming individuals to our shores. This has not and will not change. We are proud of the fact that Canada continues to have one of the most welcoming immigration, refugee, and asylum programs in the world. It does not matter how or when a newcomer arrived in Canada, we know they will make long-lasting contributions to our great country.

Canada's diversity is among our greatest assets, and in an increasingly interconnected global economy, more should be done. Our diversity not only brings its own economic and social awards, but given our aging population, having a robust and efficient immigration system will prove critical to our long-term economic growth.

Those countries that fail to recognize this reality or uphold our cherished values will inevitably do themselves a great disservice. As our world becomes increasingly interdependent and connected, our diversity will be a great source of Canadian strength. While we cannot dictate the domestic policies of other countries, I remain convinced that the Canadian model will be a shining example for others.

If anyone doubts the virtues of attracting the best and brightest from around the world, let them come to Canada. Tolerance, openness, inclusiveness, diversity, these values are obviously non-negotiable for us. In fact, they speak to the very core of who we are as a nation. Canadians have told us time and time again that they wish to keep our doors open to those wanting to make contributions to our country, as well as to those who are in need of our protection. We are all better off as a result.

As the Prime Minister has stated, "Diversity is our strength". These words matter, as we have seen Canadians, and indeed the international community rally around Canada's message of compassion, generosity, and inclusiveness. We know, however, that mere slogans are not enough. Canada must always forcefully adhere to these values. The tragic events of this weekend are a reminder of how vigilant we must be in defending Canadian values of pluralism and multiculturalism.

• (2335)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know we are coming to the end of this debate, and I have expressed before my significant concerns about the executive order. I want to ask the member this. Given the value of this exercise, it would be worthwhile for us to consider having more emergency debates in the future about international human rights issues, perhaps touching on very significant human rights issues in Iran, Russia, and China.

Would agree the member agree with me that these types of emergency debates around international human rights questions are worthwhile and it would be something worth doing again on other very significant human rights issues around the world?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, when we see issues such as the one before us tonight, where Canadians from coast to coast to coast have demonstrated that this is an issue of great concern, of course we would all benefit greatly from understanding the views of the members here and the government would benefit from monitoring what our thoughts are and changing things as need be. Therefore, yes, I would certainly be very much in favour of that.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with many of the things my hon. colleague said. I just returned from a foreign affairs committee trip to Europe, and I would turn on the European news whenever I could. It was quite sad to see them start to refer not to the United States of America, this great country and neighbour, but to Trumpland. They would talk about what was happening that day or that week in Trumpland. So this beacon of hope and freedom that is our neighbour is getting a reputation around the world that is really quite unfortunate. We as Canadians really need to emphasize what it means to be Canadian and the fact that we value multiculturalism, diversity, and equity.

We have communities across the country, including my community of Revelstoke, which has private sponsors of refugees. They have been renting an apartment now for a number of months in a very tight rental market and have picked a family, and yet this family is stuck in the process. Would the hon. member agree to work with his government to expedite bringing more of these immigrants and refugees to Canada?

• (2340)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, if I could first refer to the member's observations in Europe, I fully agree with him. I think we can stand very tall on our record since late 2015, and that is something that has been noticed around the world. The world has watched as we have provided a home to no less than 45,000 Syrian refugees. Our numbers this year will also be incredibly generous.

To the second issue that was raised by my hon. colleague, as he is likely aware, as was stated by the Minister of Immigration earlier today, for this year the government has—wisely, I would say—agreed to triple the number of privately sponsored refugees, so that is something where we have seen evidence of support among Canadians over the course of the last year, and I think that is the right approach for us to pursue in the current year.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we near the end of the debate this evening, I would like to begin by recognizing the tragic events that took place at the Quebec City Islamic cultural centre and state unequivocally that the people of Fredericton, whom I have the pleasure to represent here, stand in solidarity with the members of the Quebec City Muslim community and all Muslims across this country.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for introducing the motion to debate this issue this evening, the U.S. executive order issued by the White House on January 27, which restricts travel and immigration to the United States from seven named countries.

With the integrated nature of Canada's economy with the world and in particular with the United States, it is important that Canadians have accurate and up-to-date information on any new measures that affect business and their travel.

[*Translation*]

Canada's prosperity and that of the United States are entwined. Our countries' trade and investment relationship is worth \$1.4 trillion. More than 400,000 people and \$2 billion worth of goods and services cross our shared border every day. Our relationship is responsible for millions of jobs in both countries.

That is why, as soon as the executive order was issued, we decided to assess its impact and make sure Canadians get all of the relevant facts as quickly as possible.

Regardless of the change in government, our immediate move to build relationships put Canada in a position to ask representatives at all levels of the U.S. government for information about next steps and repercussions and to convey our concerns in relation to Canadian citizens and permanent residents. We have managed to obtain assurances on those matters.

[*English*]

First, let me reassure Canadians that this executive order will not substantially affect them. The documentary requirements for crossing the border have not changed for Canadian citizens and no new visas or other authorizations are required. We do not anticipate that Canadian citizens, including those with dual citizenships with one of the seven named countries, will experience any difference in their border-crossing experience when travelling on their valid Canadian passport.

As the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship clearly stated, we continue to be actively engaged at every level so that we can provide Canadians with greater certainty and clarity.

That is our first priority.

• (2345)

[*Translation*]

To that end, we are using every possible means to communicate with Canadians. Over the past few days, we have been continuously updating our website, travel.gc.ca, whenever new information comes in regarding the executive order. The Canadian embassy in Washington and our department are issuing and updating notices on social media on a regular basis. We send any information we receive about the executive order to the provinces and territories and we are in contact with the business community from both countries about the order and the impact it might have on them.

Canadians turned to us for help. Just so hon. members and my constituents are aware, I want to point out that since the executive order was signed on Friday, the Department of Foreign Affairs has received more than 100 calls and emails on the subject, and Canada's missions in the United States have received more than 50 requests for information. It should be noted that as of this morning, we have not had to open consular services to help Canadians affected by this executive order.

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This opportunity to speak to Parliament allows me to share what we know and to reassure Canadians that we are doing our best to ensure that border crossings run as smoothly as possible and that Canadians and Canadian businesses continue to have reliable access to the United States.

[*English*]

In this regard, we are continuing to engage with our U.S. counterparts to protect Canadian interests going forward. This engagement is happening at all levels and with numerous departments and agencies. Senior Government of Canada officials have been working around the clock to quickly seek clarity for Canadians from the White House, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, among others.

In addition, at the request of the Prime Minister, our national security adviser reached out to his counterpart in the U.S., Michael Flynn, to seek further clarification. I want to assure the House that officials through our embassy in Washington, D.C. are also continuing to engage their counterparts to get further clarity on the actions taken in the United States in the last few days, including on further direction provided to U.S. customs officials responsible for decisions at the border.

While efforts in recent days have focused on clarifying the scope and effect of the executive order, co-operation between Canada and the United States to ensure a secure and efficient border has been a long-standing and mutually beneficial partnership. We will continue to secure clarity and will work tirelessly to make sure that travel for Canadians and permanent residents can continue, that families can be with one another, and that businesses can continue to prosper, providing ongoing benefits to both Canada and the United States.

We will fiercely defend our national interests. Of course, it is in our interest to co-operate with our most important neighbour, the United States, and to also continue to engage constructively with the world. We hold this maxim to be true and will always reaffirm that Canada is stronger because of our diversity.

Canada is a country of immigrants and Canadians are proud of a long history of acting with compassion and humanitarianism to those seeking refuge for themselves and their families. We have always welcomed people in need of protection and we will continue to do so.

We remain committed to being an open and welcoming country and to embracing diversity. We will celebrate that and will continue to showcase it to the world. I have seen this reflected in the Fredericton riding, the riding I have the honour to represent, which settled, according to the local resettlement agency, more Syrian refugees per capita than elsewhere in the country. There are many stories that make me proud of this pan-Canadian effort, proud of Canadians, New Brunswickers, and my friends and neighbours in Fredericton.

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In particular, I think of the Syrian boy last December with the first family to arrive at the Fredericton airport, clad in a heavy coat and red toque, who told us at the airport through an interpreter that he sought to grow up to be what he explained as a bone doctor. Due to the compassion, care, and generosity of Canadians, I know that one day, when I, my children, or my grandchildren slip on the ice on Queen Street outside of my office, we can look up to this young Syrian boy, who will no doubt be a leading medical professional in our community.

As the right hon. Prime Minister has said, Canada is stronger, not weaker, because of our differences. As a multicultural, multi-faith, and inclusive society, Canada is well positioned to champion peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights internationally, and we will continue to do so with pride.

• (2350)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member made a comment about national interest and I would like to ask the member, is it not in our national interest also to stand up and defend human rights? This ban from the Trump administration undermines the essence of that. There are refugees who have had their applications for refugee status completed or close to completion in the United States who will not be able to enter the United States.

In the interest of national interest and in the spirit of defending human rights, would the member agree it is incumbent upon us, Canada, to bring in a special measure to ensure that those refugees are not left in limbo and to work with the international community to get the job done?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, as our Prime Minister and members of this government have stated clearly, we will defend our record as promoters of human rights, plurality, and peace around the world. We will promote the great work done by Canadians right across our country to welcome the 40,000 refugees who are now a part of our community. We will not shy away from sharing these values in every possible forum, whether in our bilateral relationships, whether through multilateral organizations like the UN, la Francophonie, and the Commonwealth.

We can all agree that we are proud of the work that has been undertaken by members in this chamber and Canadians right across the country over the last year. We will promote and speak forcefully to the world about the great result that has yielded for our country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my friend on his new role. He and I had the honour of being part of a delegation to the United States up to and during the U.S. election. It certainly it was a fascinating trip. I know we both learned quite a bit. It was quite eye opening about what was going on there.

I want to ask the member to share a bit more about how Canadians can be sure about the impact on them of this executive order, especially Canadians who may be from one of these seven countries and contemplating travel to the United States. We have heard assurances that assurances have been given, but how do we know, insofar as those clarifications are not in the executive order and insofar as there is a lack of clarity with the legal status, what decisions individual border guards will make unless we have clear

public statements or directives in writing from the administration directly?

Maybe in his role, the member has information about this he can share. I think Canadians watching would really appreciate that specific information so they can have some of that greater assurance.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, I certainly cherish the opportunity that my friend and I had to learn from our neighbours to the south in their electoral experience last October and November.

I believe the member would have heard earlier this evening the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship speak about the measures that he had taken immediately following the coming down of the executive order to seek clarity about the situation for Canadian citizens who held dual citizenship as well as permanent residents. He continues to work around the clock to seek clarity as the situation changes.

Other members of the cabinet, including the Prime Minister and his team, are constantly seeking information from our American counterparts and are sharing this information as we get more clarity through the variety of channels we have, whether on Government of Canada websites and through different forms of media. Members of Parliament are also working hard to share this information with constituents in their own communities across the country.

• (2355)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate that I have the last spot in tonight's emergency debate.

I want to start by thanking my great friend from Vancouver East for bringing forward this debate and all of the Canadians both in the galleries and across this great country who have been listening to us, as well as the pages who have had to stay up with us at this late hour.

Like many Canadians, I was surprised by the meteoric rise of Donald Trump as the Republican nominee and his eventual election as the President of the United States. His campaign was marked by misogyny, racism, xenophobia, and a complete disregard for the most basic of facts. In my opinion he represented the absolute nadir of American politics, a political manifestation of the worst kind of reactionary demagoguery not seen since 1930s Europe.

It was once my hope that the Office of the President of the United States, which is arguably the most powerful and responsibility-filled position in the world, would somehow temper the man and make him reach out to all Americans and indeed the rest of the world and assure them that the campaign was now over and that he was going to try to govern in a more moderate course of action. I now see that it was a false hope.

We are here tonight to bring to light the actions of our neighbours and our friends. We have been listening to Americans, whether they have been lining up in protests at American airports, or whether it has been people in positions of power like American governors, senators, or members of congress speaking out. These are the people in the United States who have shown the real courage to speak out when they see something is wrong. It is up to us as Canadians and as their neighbour to also do something.

One of my caucus colleagues when he was offering some commentary on the state of politics in Canada offered this bit of wisdom. He said we have got to stop talking about what we are doing; we have to start talking more about whom we represent and why we are here.

In my opinion, the Liberals tonight have been speaking too much about what they are doing. We on this side of the House are talking about why we are here and whom we represent. My phone, like the phones of many of my colleagues across the House, has been ringing off the hook from the weekend on; constituents are concerned with the actions of our American neighbour. They want us as the people's representatives of this great country to speak up and give voice, to have this country speak with more courage and conviction, as world leaders have already done. That is what we are asking for, and for us to back those words up with meaningful action.

We realize that on that side of the House there may be some members of Parliament who are afraid of rocking the boat of the friendship and the relationship we have with the United States. That may be the case.

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I will conclude on this point. The measure of a friendship is not how we act during the good times. The real measure, the real test, comes in how our relationship interacts during the tough times, when we see a friend, a valued neighbour, taking the wrong course of action. The true measure of a friendship is when we have the courage to speak out against the wrong we see, the dishonoured people around the world who are being affected by this position that the United States president is taking. That is the true measure of a friendship.

It has been an honour to speak on this tonight. I hope that, through the debate that we have heard tonight, the government hears the people's voices and we start to see some action reflect the meaningful debate we have heard.

● (2400)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 12 midnight, I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:00 a.m.)

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