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Friday, February 10, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 10, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the house the Minister of International Trade be permitted to speak to the motion for 3rd reading of Bill C-31.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy 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)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank all the members of this House for granting unanimous consent for me to speak this morning. I am very grateful. I will be splitting my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

I have the privilege of speaking this morning on Bill C-31, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine. This is a momentous time in our history for us to be looking at this bill together in this House. I am indeed very pleased to speak

today on the topic of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement and the benefits it will provide to all Canadians.

When we talk about trade, those are benefits that are going to each and every one of the 338 jurisdictions and ridings we have in our country. The good people who sent every member sitting in this House here to represent them will benefit from our free trade agreement. This is a good example of what Canada can do in the world, when Canada stands for progressive trade, and when Canada becomes a beacon of hope and openness around the world.

This agreement is an important step in Canada's relationship with Ukraine, and one that is supported by Canadians from across the country. Following the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian migration to Canada last year, we are reminded of the Ukrainian Canadian community, which is more than 1.2 million strong in our nation.

Our people-to-people ties form a strong foundation for the partnership enjoyed by Canada and Ukraine today. Canada has remained steadfast in its support of Ukraine and believes the free trade agreement will only strengthen this relationship going forward. Trade is good for the world; trade is good for the people.

In 1991, Canada became the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. I am sure this is an act that a lot of members in the House take great pride in. Since then, and especially now in the face of recent crises, Canada has prioritized its role in the international community by encouraging Ukraine's and Canada's shared commitment to security, advancing democracy, and promoting sustainable economic growth.

One of the ways that Canada has done this is through technical and financial assistance, which since 1991 amounts to more than \$1.2 billion. Reflecting the multi-faceted nature of our relationship, this includes support for macroeconomic stabilization, democratic and economic reforms, support for promoting the rule of law, security and stability, and, very importantly, humanitarian assistance.

In addition, Canada is seeking to support efforts to find a lasting and sustainable resolution to the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine through the provision of stabilization and security assistance. Since 2014, over \$60 million has been committed to support initiatives in a wide range of areas, including ceasefire and human rights monitoring, police reform, and non-military equipment and training.

Further, Canada has provided \$27 million in humanitarian assistance to help people affected by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, including emergency shelters and essential relief items, safe drinking water, food, sanitation, basic medical care, hygiene supplies, education, protection, and psychosocial support.

Government Orders

I am sure that every member in this House today recognizes how Canada is a power for good in the world. When I say these words, I am sure many of us take great pride in saying what role Canada can play in the world. As we can see through our multi-faceted work with Ukraine, Canada is deeply committed to supporting the economic reform and development efforts of the Government of Ukraine.

The Canada-Ukraine FTA will only reinforce these efforts. The agreement is complementary on the premise that economic development can strengthen the social foundations in countries and contribute to a domestic environment where human rights, good governance, and the rule of law are all respected.

I am sure that is something that all members in the House firmly believe to be the foundation of every nation. This agreement will create new business opportunities and assist with developing a predictable and prosperous future for Ukraine.

● (1010)

The beauty of the agreement, however, is that it is mutually beneficial. It has opportunities for both Ukraine and Canada. Tariff elimination will improve access to each other's markets and thus help to expand commerce between Canada and Ukraine.

Upon implementation, the Canada-Ukraine FTA will result in an immediate elimination of tariffs on 86% of Canadian exports to Ukraine. This is very significant. The remaining tariffs will be phased out over seven years on industrial products, fish and seafood, and essentially all agricultural goods exported by Canada.

Ukraine is an interesting market for Canadian exporters with opportunities in areas such as aerospace, agricultural equipment, information and communication technologies, agriculture, agrifood, fish and seafood, and mining equipment. At the same time Canada will eliminate tariffs on 99.9% of imports from Ukraine. This stands to benefit Ukrainian exporters for products such as sunflower oil, sugar and chocolate, baked goods, vodka, apparel, ceramics, and mineral products.

An hon. member: Vodka.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I see members already interested in free trade. It is only Friday morning, but I see a lot of support in the House for free trade.

Beyond tariff reductions, the FTA includes disciplines and commitments on non-tariff measures that will help ensure that market access gains are not constrained by unjustified trade barriers. This agreement also includes commitments on trade facilitation that are designed to reduce red tape at the border. These provisions will increase certainty and predictability for businesses, something that Canadian businesses across our country will want to see.

Furthermore, the Canada-Ukraine FTA reflects this government's commitment to a progressive approach to trade in trying to ensure that trade reflects Canadian values such as environmental protection and labour rights. This agreement therefore includes comprehensive provision in the areas of labour, environment, transparency, and anti-corruption.

[*Translation*]

As part of this free trade agreement, Canada and Ukraine have agreed on anti-corruption provisions to protect human rights. Under this agreement, Canada and Ukraine have committed to ensuring that companies can be held responsible for human rights violations.

The agreement also encourages both countries to look at implementing legal protection for whistleblowers. Time and again, Canada has shown that it considers protecting workers' rights a priority. It has negotiated labour protection provisions in the free trade agreements it is a party to, provisions that are essential to upholding human rights. The labour provisions in the free trade agreement with Ukraine will ensure that workers' basic rights are protected in both countries.

Canada and Ukraine also agreed to uphold the standards in the International Labour Organization's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. To do so, both parties must comply with labour laws governing standards pertaining to minimum wage, hours of work, and workplace health and safety. The labour provisions protect the right to collective bargaining and freedom of association. Child labour, forced labour, and discrimination at work are forbidden. The Canadian labour movement made a vital contribution to promoting equality for women, indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities.

One of our government's priorities is to strengthen the middle class and ensure that all Canadians benefit from trade. Canada's long-term prosperity depends on broad access to foreign markets because trade is a driver of our country's growth and economic success. It enables Canadian businesses to grow, gives Canadian consumers access to a variety of products at competitive prices, and creates jobs for the middle class.

In closing, that is exactly what the free trade agreement with Ukraine is intended to do. I want to thank all members who are here this morning for adding their support by voting in favour of the Canada-Ukraine agreement. This support will help ensure that Canada remains a model of global progressive trade as well as a world leader that chooses to do business with a country like Ukraine, so that people on both sides of the Atlantic can benefit from a progressive trade agreement.

● (1015)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech and congratulate him on his new responsibilities.

[*English*]

My question is with respect to the area of corruption. The member mentioned that there are measures taken to prevent corruption. I am interested in hearing more about how we will prevent people from making deals with their buddies, and those kinds of things. Could he elaborate a bit on those measures?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has always been a great supporter, and someone for whom I have a lot of respect.

Government Orders

It is very important that we talk about that this morning. When we talk about progressive trade, what Canada stands for in these trade agreements is to try to move the bar higher in a number of countries with respect to that. There is a whole chapter in the agreement with respect to terms of transparency and anti-corruption. It would require legislation in the jurisdiction we are talking about and would make acts of bribery a criminal offence, as well as imposing sanctions that reflect the gravity of these acts and the negative impacts they have on the poorest people. We know that corruption disproportionately affects poor people, and those who are working hard to join the middle class. Lastly, any enterprises doing so will be liable for the crimes that they commit.

I am happy to receive that question, because it shows on the record how, when we talk about progressive trade, we can help people in a concrete fashion.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the Minister of International Trade, for sharing his time with me today. Because we will be supporting the bill at third reading, I am sure it has made it easier for him.

As well, we support the bill because of the inclusion of clauses relating to environment, labour, and corruption, and because of what it does not include, which are investor-state provisions and forcing municipalities to be part of the agreement. I will talk more on that later.

I recently heard from a Republican senator that, from the U.S. perspective, Americans think that trade agreements are not only important because of the trade aspects, but also because of what they do for world peace. Therefore, I would be interested in my colleague's comment on that approach to trade.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia, but I also want to thank him on behalf of the people of Ukraine and Canada for supporting this agreement. He has made the point as to how progressive trade and these agreements are good for the world. When we set an ambitious agenda for Canada with respect to progressive trade, whether we are talking about labour standards, or the environment, something that I know the member, and I think all members in this House, care a lot about, that is exactly the voice that people in the world want to hear.

This morning, I had the privilege of meeting with a number of ambassadors. People are asking Canada to seize the moment, to show the world that we can think about open trade and move the bar by working together. There is no greater pleasure for me than to stand here today, knowing that this has bipartisan support. We are sending a strong message, not only to Ukraine, but to the world, that Canada will always stand behind free trade, will always stand for open societies, and will always stand for the environment. We will be true to our values. Our Canadian values will be exported to our trade agreement, and those in the world who are like-minded will benefit. It is all about people. This agreement will improve the lives of people. I am sure that the constituents in my colleague's riding and in mine, as well as the good people of Ukraine, will benefit from what we are doing today. This is an historic moment.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain for sharing his time today.

New Democrats support deepening trade relationships with Ukraine, particularly as it reaches out to the west while trying to deal with ongoing tensions and problems in Russia. We very much support this agreement, and we have, of course, for many years supported improvement of Canada–Ukraine relations. We support this particular agreement because of the lower tariffs on Canadian exports, but it will also do a lot more. This is the kind of bilateral trade that the NDP can support, for a number of reasons, and I will speak to those in a minute.

What is good about this agreement is that it contains chapters on rules of origin, trade facilitation, trade remedies, state-owned enterprises, government procurement, intellectual property, environment, labour, and a state-to-state dispute settlement mechanism. The labour chapter includes comprehensive and enforceable provisions and is the most comprehensive labour chapter ever negotiated by Ukraine. This could raise the bar on labour standards for Ukrainian workers, which is important to us in the NDP.

What it does not include is equally important, as I alluded to earlier. It would not bring in investor-state provisions that would allow corporations to sue Canada. For the life of me, I cannot figure out why we ever got those clauses in any of our trade agreements. It does not seem right that a corporation can sue Canada if it does not like the fact that we are looking after our own interests.

There are other reasons besides trade that I think this agreement is important. I want to thank the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie for giving me the opportunity to travel to Ukraine in January as part of the foreign affairs and international development committee trip. What is interesting about being in Ukraine is the challenges it has. Of course, the major challenge is the war with the Russian-backed rebels in the eastern part of Ukraine. That took a step in the wrong direction about a week ago, so it continues to have impacts. Over a million refugees have been created by this war. We do not hear much about that because they are not living in tent camps. We do not get the same kind of visuals that we get from Syria. However, over one million refugees have been created from this ongoing war in Ukraine, and Ukraine is at war.

It is easy to sit in the comfort of our homes back in our ridings and not understand what is going on across the world. This trade agreement is important, because it sends a message to Russia that Canada is there and that we care about Ukraine.

One of the things that Ukrainians are doing is fighting corruption. What makes Ukraine so exciting is that this new push for democracy is being led by youth. It is amazing to see what is happening as a result of those youth and the involvement from civil society in Ukraine.

Government Orders

There are a couple of examples of what Ukrainians are doing to deal with the corruption. The RCMP are over there helping to train Ukraine's new police force. The reason the Ukrainians need a new police force is that they have fired 25,000 patrol officers in the last two years. These patrol officers earned most of their living by taking bribes. They fired all 25,000 of them. They have hired 11,000 new members. New members have to be 35 years of age or younger to get on the force, because Ukrainians want a new demographic with a new set of values involved in the police going forward. We were able to watch some of the training of the new recruits in Ukraine, led by our own RCMP, who are respected around the world for our training abilities.

The Ukrainians also fired all of their Supreme Court judges, and they are looking to hire new judges. They expect another 2,000 judges to be fired this year in Ukraine. They are working hard to clean up the corruption there.

Democracy is interesting. One of the reasons that Mr. Putin is invading Ukraine and that he took over Crimea is because of the fact that Ukraine is working hard to become a democratic country. I met with a number of members of civil society, and what was interesting for parliamentarians in the room is that civil society actually drafts most of the legislation in Ukraine. Youthful people get together, they draft the legislation, and they pass it on to the members of parliament who then work on it to bring it into law. It is democracy at its finest, in the sense that it is driven very much from the ground up.

● (1020)

Related to that is that many of us over the years have had Ukrainian parliamentary interns. That program is in financial jeopardy this year, I believe. It would be great to see some kind of sponsorship or support for that program. I have met a number of interns over the last year; it was my first time as a member of Parliament. They were so excited about democracy, taking Canadian values back to Ukraine, and making a difference in that country. I hope that the parliamentary intern program can continue.

In terms of the military, Ukraine is working on building up its military. It wants to have 250,000 trained troops. It also needs to bring up the training to a standard that is acceptable to NATO. That is what Canada is over there helping them with right now. We are trying to bring the Ukrainian military forces up to a standard so that NATO will accept Ukraine as part of the group. We are not there yet, but that is the target.

We live in pretty isolated circumstances here in Canada. Unless we get the opportunity to travel and see what is happening in these countries, we do not realize what is going on. Some of the sayings that are important there, such as, "If you want peace in that part of Europe, prepare for war", sound awfully hawkish coming from a dove. However, having been there, I absolutely believe that we need a military deterrent in Europe, Asia, and anywhere surrounding Russia. It is important that we see that happen in Ukraine.

I want to go back a bit to the free trade agreement and the fact that municipalities are not included in this particular agreement. When I was mayor of Cranbrook and heard that way off in Ottawa they were signing an agreement that was going to make it difficult for me, as mayor of my community, to support local businesses over foreign businesses, it was not very well received, quite frankly. Therefore, I

am very happy to see that this agreement does not include municipalities. We have had the same reaction from the school board in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. This agreement does not include school boards either.

This is an excellent agreement from a trade perspective. It is one that we should be using as an example for further trade agreements. However, the agreement is also important for building on the Canada-Ukraine friendship and letting Mr. Putin know that Canada will be there for the Ukraine. It is important for trade, but it is also important for world peace.

● (1025)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague across the way for all the work he has done on this file.

We have heard a lot about trade today. When we look at the numbers, trade is quite modest between our two countries. It has averaged around \$285 million over the last five years. However, one of the interesting components to the agreement is the investment component and the fact that Ukraine has a free trade association agreement with the European Union, which allows small and medium-size Canadian businesses.

A lot of these free trade agreements only look at the big corporate entities. They are already in the European Union. However, small and medium-size Canadian businesses would now have an opportunity to invest in Ukraine, where capital costs are significantly lower than they would be in a place like Germany. Also, manufacturing costs are a lot lower. Therefore, there is an opportunity for small and medium-sized businesses to invest in Ukraine as a gateway into Europe, and, vice versa, small and medium-sized Ukrainian businesses to invest in Canada and the North American market. I wonder if my colleague would like to speak to that particular point.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, anything we can do to build small businesses in Canada and Ukraine is welcome. The strength of the Canadian economy comes from the strength of our small businesses. Having Ukrainian investors come to Canada and invest in small businesses, and Canadian investors go to the Ukraine and invest in small businesses, helps build a secure economy. That is what a secure economy is. It certainly needs the bigger companies, but small businesses are what makes communities on a local level successful.

● (1030)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over many years, this has now come to fruition. Being of Ukrainian heritage, I am particularly pleased to see this trade agreement. However, given the Russian aggression in the Ukraine, does the member feel this will impact the trade agreement?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I used to sit on the mayor's committee in British Columbia not so long ago.

There is a fair bit of concern, which starts with concern around corruption and around what is happening with Putin and Russia. However, by having more Canadian investments in the country, it does send a positive message, both to Ukraine and to Russia, that Canada will be there for Ukraine.

Government Orders

We went to Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Latvia and Poland. One of the perspectives we heard, which we do not really think about here, was to look at Russia over the last less than a decade. First it was Chechnya, then Georgia, then Crimea and now eastern Ukraine. The question those countries that surround Russia ask is who will be next.

Building business relationships is really important. Some of those other countries potentially seem to be a bit more secure. However, if I had money, I would invest it in Ukraine because that is the Canadian thing to do. We want to build and strengthen Ukraine.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech was very interesting speech, and I am happy to hear the NDP supporting a trade agreement.

Our government brought 42 of the best in class trade agreements, and as we go through different trade agreements, we learn as we go.

As the chair of status of women committee, when we study the economic status of women, one of the things we talk about is how we should put gender parity into future trade agreements.

Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, I would support that on principle. We need to be concerned about the environment and labour in the countries with which we deal. We should be concerned about women's equality and equity. I absolutely think equity should be part of what we consider in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-31, an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. It was important to me to talk about this because, since I arrived in Ottawa, in the course of my duties here I have come to know and admire someone of Ukrainian heritage. I am talking about the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who is proud of his Ukrainian roots, and I salute him.

Negotiations for this agreement began in 2009, under the leadership of Stephen Harper, whom I commend for the vision he had for Canada and the entire world. Now the agreement is reaching its final stages before coming into force. I doubt you could find a government in the history of Canada, and perhaps even the world, that believed more in free trade than the former Conservative government. We negotiated and concluded many agreements. We did more than just talk; we followed through on our commitments.

We signed free trade deals with 46 countries. We opened the doors to a multitude of foreign markets for Canadian merchants and manufacturers. We created many new opportunities for them. Now it is up to them to conquer the world.

As a businessman, I am well aware of the challenges out there and the obstacles that stifle ambition. Tariffs are often a headache that really get in the way. On this side of the House, we know and have always known that Canadians are pretty smart, and if they are on a level playing field they will succeed and grow their business. We saw that with NAFTA and that was a big challenge. Many businesses

had to reinvent themselves to keep making progress and conquer the world, and they succeeded brilliantly. Now, the sky is the limit for Canadians thanks to all these agreements. Again, I want to thank Mr. Harper, one of the best prime ministers in Canadian history.

The agreement that is being ratified was inspired and led by Mr. Harper. He was the driving force behind this project. Where there is a will, there is a way. By visiting Ukraine four times between 2013 and 2015, Mr. Harper showed that this project was a priority to him. Likewise, his many visits to Canada's north showed that that region was extremely important in his eyes.

The fact that several thousand Ukrainians immigrated to Canada in the early 1900s made it easier to build closer ties with the Ukraine. Many Ukrainians settled in a number of provinces, especially in the west, seeking a more prosperous future.

It is now time for us to give back to our Ukrainian friends. We are reaching out to them so that we can do even more business together and strengthen both our economies. We are also reaching out to our Ukrainian brothers and sisters to help them stand up to the Russian giant, the neighbour that threatens Ukraine's integrity. In fact, hundreds of Canadian troops have been deployed to Ukraine to help shore up our ally's forces.

Ukraine is part of Canada's family, and we are "all in", as we say in poker. We want to do business with them, but we also share their fears. Many Canadians think about their loved ones who are in Ukraine when they see the horrible images on the TV news. That is why I am even happier to know that this free trade agreement will bring us closer to our Ukrainian allies and help bring them out of the darkness.

Enough preamble, let us get down to the specifics. This agreement will make it possible for many Canadian producers who already have a foothold in Ukraine to increase their business. I will focus on my own backyard, Quebec, and explain how this agreement will benefit Quebecers. The first area that comes to my mind is the pork industry. The duty-free export limit for Canadian pork products will increase from 10,000 to 20,000 tonnes per year over seven years following the agreement's entry into force.

That is good news for thousands of people across Quebec, given how many families are involved in all levels of the pork production chain. It is excellent news for hog farmers, manufacturers like Olymel and Les viandes du Breton, and for all of their suppliers.

The agreement also immediately eliminates the 5% tariff rate on maple syrup and maple sugar. That is one less barrier for a typical Quebec product. Even the first occupants of Quebec harvested maple sap, and now my province produces 72% of the world's maple syrup. This industry now contributes \$800 million to Canada's gross domestic product and could benefit from a new market without tariff barriers.

Government Orders

Our sugar maple growers, many of whom are also farmers, will be able to increase their operating revenue. As a result, over 6,400 companies will grow in value with the development of new markets.

• (1035)

Maple products accurately represent the economic profile of many Canadian industries. Most of them are dependent on a few export markets. In this case, most of the maple products we produce are exported to our neighbours to the south, the United States. That makes sense because they are our neighbours and a large market.

As a businessman, I know that we should not put all of our eggs in one basket. It is important for this industry to expand into other markets to sell any surpluses.

Whether we are talking about Germany or France, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union or the free trade agreement with Ukraine, our producers need that assistance, particularly since there is a growing market for maple products in Ukraine.

Exports of maple products grew from just under 2,770 pounds in 2014 to over 51,000 pounds in 2015. Imagine how much that will grow in the future if there are no tariffs.

Another Quebec sector that will benefit from this agreement is the icewine industry. Once this agreement comes into force, tariffs of 30 euro cents per litre will be immediately eliminated. That is good news for our producers, who make high quality icewine that is very popular throughout the world.

This agreement is a step in the right direction. It gives our businesses one more option with easier access to a new export market. That is the kind of decision governments need to make to enable an economy like ours grow and prosper. Our size should not stop us from thinking big; we are too creative for that. That is why we need to go out there and conquer the world, and that is why the Conservatives negotiated so many free trade agreements when they were in power.

I thank Stephen Harper, the Liberal government, and the New Democratic Party for supporting Bill C-31, which will enable us to grow and move forward.

• (1040)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada is one million strong, and that adds another very interesting dimension to this agreement.

Some Ukrainian Canadians speak Ukrainian and understand Ukraine's history and culture. Would my colleague care to comment on how that can benefit Canadian businesses wanting to invest in Ukraine?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora is so huge is one of the main reasons that we have such close ties with Ukraine.

As I said in my speech, Quebec will benefit enormously from this agreement. Although Quebec does not have a huge Ukrainian-Canadian population, we can already see that this is going to work.

Imagine what this will do in the rest of Canada, especially in the Prairies, which is home to most Ukrainian-Canadian communities. The language barrier is not likely to be a problem. This is going to be fantastic for Canada as a whole.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his good words and support for the agreement.

When we look back on the trade agreements that were signed by the Conservative government, a number of them included investor-state provisions, which basically tied the hands of municipalities to not be able to support their businesses locally the way they would like to.

I would be interested to hear the member's perspective. Does he think this agreement is a good model for future free trade agreements for Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, in any agreement, different rules can be more beneficial to certain markets than to others.

What we see here with the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is that the tariff barriers on exports are going to favour Canada.

As I said in my speech, many products could now be exported to Ukrainian markets, including pork and maple products.

Could Ukraine benefit in return? Yes, probably. Free trade deals should benefit both sides.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in support of this bill. I am pleased to speak in support of an agreement that would further cement the positive relations Canada has enjoyed with Ukraine over many years. As an Alberta MP, and in the context of this bill, I would like to take the opportunity to appreciate and highlight the many contributions of the Ukrainian community, especially in Alberta, where we celebrate that community on an annual basis. The contributions of the community to the Alberta economy and the Canadian economy as a whole are very important.

I am very pleased that there is cross-partisan support for this agreement. Trade, especially in countries that have gone through periods of economic crisis or political disruption, is one of the best ways Canada can help them into the next phase of their development.

When we look at what Ukraine has gone through in the last few years, we all have to pause and recognize the significance of the ability of a country like Canada to enter into a free trade agreement with it. Since the election of the new government in Ukraine, under President Poroshenko, in 2004, Ukraine has begun necessary reforms to stimulate economic growth, including taking steps to address corruption and introducing measures to create a more positive business environment.

Government Orders

This agreement is the logical next step in the acceleration and development of Ukraine's economy. I want to note some of the highlights that would support all Canadian businesses. My ask of the government, much as it was when I rose in support of the Canada-EU free trade agreement, is that the government work with our trade commissioners and economic development agencies to put forward a plan on how Canadian businesses can take advantage of this free trade agreement in an expeditious manner.

One of the key provisions I support, and that I know many businesses will as well, is the elimination of tariffs on 86% of Canadian exports, with the balance of tariff concessions to be implemented over a period of up to seven years. This includes the elimination by Ukraine of tariffs on all Canadian exports of industrial products, fish, and seafood and the elimination of the vast majority of Ukraine's agricultural tariffs. Key products benefiting from either immediate or eventual duty-free access include beef, certain pulses, grains, canola oil, processed food, animal feed, frozen fish, caviar, certain articles of iron and steel, industrial machinery, articles of plastics, and cosmetics. This is certainly going to provide a lot of opportunity for Canadian agricultural producers.

My hope is that some of the established mechanisms will allow agricultural producers to innovate to tailor some of their products for new markets. I want to give a shout-out to the Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership and the Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence as examples. There are a lot of programs, centres of excellence, and services that different governments have invested in overtime to help businesses connect with the opportunities presented by new free trade agreements. My hope, in the event this agreement actually passes into law, is that governments will then focus their attention on those business-to-business links.

The agreement also contains a range of disciplines and commitments pertaining to non-tariff measures that will help ensure that market access gains are not constrained by unjustified trade barriers. The agreement also contains commitments related to trade facilitation designed to reduce red tape at the border.

The digital economy component is interesting too. The chapter in this free trade agreement on electronic commerce obliges both Canada and the Ukraine not to levy customs duties or other charges on digital products that are transmitted electronically. This is a very interesting provision, given that it reflects the new reality in trade. It is a good thing for Canada to be on the forefront of these types of trade agreements as they relate to international best practices.

• (1045)

I would like to take a few moments to talk about why I think trade is so important in terms of the political context in Ukraine. I want to acknowledge the hard work of my colleague from the Liberal Party, the member for Etobicoke Centre, who has really been a champion of the rights of Ukraine, in addition to some of the other members of my caucus.

We had a committee study this summer by our immigration committee. I would just like to set the context for why this agreement is so important. When a country is given economic opportunity, it gives people and civil society there the opportunity to grow.

We had representatives from the community testify at our committee. Our report notes the following:

The Committee heard about the situation in Ukraine, a country that has gone from having no internally displaced persons to having 1.8 million over a two-year period as a result of the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region. According to Aleksandr Galkin, Director, The Right to Protection, the IDPs [internally displaced people] need permanent housing and employment opportunities, and those receiving government pensions need income security. [A representative]...with the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), explained that a return to the rebel-held areas is fraught with danger, where anyone who expressed critical opinions about rebels is at risk; there are documented examples of writers and others appearing on blacklists and being detained, tortured, and disappeared. Witnesses also explained that residents living along or close to the "contact line" have very limited access to humanitarian and medical aid, due to security reasons and a ban on cargo deliveries.

Two witnesses...Ukrainian-government sympathizers shared their personal stories of capture and arrest, torture of all kinds, and impunity for abuses in the rebel-controlled areas. The Committee also heard from [a witness], apprehended and tortured in Crimea, forced to testify against innocent people and sentenced to forced labour. Both men implored the Committee to remember the people still held in captivity and to fight for their release....

Witness also suggested...maintaining sanctions against Russia, continued or increased support for the OSCE and the OSCE special monitoring mission, continued support as election observers, and help to find a political solution to the conflict. Further, Canada could provide aid to help integrate IDPs, to rebuild institutions such as the media that have been destroyed by the conflict, and to battle corruption. Training to police officers and border guards and support to civil society organizations were also recommended areas for Canada's support.

I wanted to read that excerpt from the committee, because it sets the context for why it is so important for trade agreements like this to be signed with countries like Ukraine. We already have a diaspora community that is very well integrated in Canada. There are a lot of Ukrainian diaspora-led businesses that will see natural trade opportunities under this agreement, but more importantly, this in some way will help to rebuild the economy of Ukraine, as it has gone through exceptionally hard circumstances.

We all have moments in our lives in this place when we pause and reflect on the gravity of our role. For anyone who sat through the committee hearings, the testimony presented by these witnesses was harrowing. It was truly disturbing to know some of the human rights abuses that have happened in Ukraine over the last couple of years.

I really think Canada has a duty beyond trade to stand against the human rights abuses that are happening there and stand against the illegal occupation of Crimea. Certainly trade is one way to do that. It sends a message to the international community that Canada is at the forefront of protecting these rights.

I feel that we have had a lot of support from the diaspora community. I have heard it over and over again as I have travelled across Alberta. This is a really positive sign to the international community that Canada gets it and is standing up for what is right.

With that, I am happy to take questions.

Statements by Members

•(1050)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the aisle noted that this is one of the few times we have had a trade agreement that everyone agrees is the right thing to do. Part of the reason is respect for the Ukrainian Canadian community and its tremendous contributions not only in Alberta but right across the country.

In the second part of her speech, she referenced what is going on inside Ukraine. We must remember the context of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. It began with the reneging on a free trade association agreement with the European Union by the former president puppet controlled by Mr. Putin. Students went into the streets and were brutally beaten in the central square in Kiev. It became known as the revolution of dignity. It was the first time in the history of the EU that protestors carrying the European Union flag, and all that it symbolized, the respect for universal human rights and democratic rights, were sniped. People carrying the European Union flag, for the first time in European Union history, were shot and killed for symbolically carrying those values.

I wonder if my colleague could expand on how that has impacted our decision to come together as a House of Commons, as a Parliament, to sign on to this free trade agreement to help Ukraine at this very difficult time.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has my deep respect for his passion and commitment to moving the yardstick forward on this issue.

What a timely question. We are in an era when there is a movement toward protectionism and isolationism when it comes to trade, and that should concern the global community. When I think about where humanity has come since the end of World War II, we have had decades of peace in Europe, which for the entire history of our species, virtually, had been at war. While there could be improvements in the EU in terms of its efficacy or its scope, the reality is that the European Union has, through economic growth, through the development of infrastructure, brought economic opportunity and hope to regions of the world that had been at war.

My colleague talked about Ukraine being removed from that network that was designed to provide stability and economic growth. That would absolutely be an act of aggression, because we know that economic opportunity and stability creates peace. It would absolutely be the worst thing to isolate a country and its people from the opportunities that are created. I would protest that. Any of us would. It is wrong. This agreement is a step in the right direction for the international community. It is the antithesis of that behaviour.

As we stand here and debate this trade agreement, it is important to put it in the global context of this protectionist desire. My colleague opposite so beautifully talked about what the benefits of trade can do. It is more than just the exchange of goods. It is the development of economic opportunity and peace.

•(1055)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons the NDP is happy to support this trade agreement, in contrast to the Canada-Europe deal, is that it does not contain investor-state provisions that would allow foreign investors to directly challenge our democratic laws, regulations, and policies

through special, secretive commercial tribunals, as opposed to the regular Canadian court system that all other Canadians, and indeed foreigners, would have access to in this country.

I wonder if the member for Calgary Nose Hill could explain to the House why the Conservatives think it is important to include investor-state provisions in CETA.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a larger question here. The world has gone crazy in terms of how political affiliation relates to a party's political, ideological position on trade.

I look at some of the discussion being had with our neighbours to the south, and I become very concerned about the thickening of borders and the desire to remove or step out of free trade agreements. The reality is, we are two generations removed from conflict in the western world. For a large part, that is due to the fact that we have opened our borders to trade. We have opened our borders to the exchange of goods and ideas. To me, that is a very positive thing. That is what creates economic stability, that is what creates economic opportunity, and that allows for peace.

I find it very weird that the NDP, which in the last Parliament did support the EU free trade agreement, has reversed its position. It is now almost reflective of the new American government's position on trade. I find that very strange.

I look forward to further debate on that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SCARBOROUGH

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week in Scarborough, we had more proof that Canadians are one community united against violence and hate. On a chilly Saturday evening, over 100 community members came together to stand in solidarity with the victims of the Quebec City terror attack and their families, and sent a message of unity and love. I thank the members for Scarborough North, Scarborough—Rouge Park, and Scarborough—Guildwood for joining us, as well as our provincial and municipal colleagues.

We were led in prayer by members of faith leaders from the Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist communities. Also, on Saturday afternoon, the youth committee at the Scarborough Muslim Association brought the community together in prayer. Our future is in good hands with these youth.

While this attack has chilled the Muslim community, we are warmed by the love and support of our fellow Canadians. Truly, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

Statements by Members

●(1100)

ELIM CHURCH

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of ministry for Elim Church in Saskatoon. From its early beginnings as a small prayer meeting in a home, the church has grown to be one of the largest churches in Saskatchewan. Elim is multi-generational, multicultural, and is one of the most ethnically diverse congregations in Saskatoon.

Over the years, Elim has made a priority of caring for its community through its extensive volunteer work. Elim operates a senior's home, provides language training, and sponsors refugee families. In the past year, it has sponsored two refugee families and anticipates a third family's arrival soon. Annually, it provides tens of thousands of dollars to help those who are marginalized, both in Saskatoon and around the world. Elim seeks to be a beacon of light as a Christian community on the journey to become more like Jesus.

Congratulations Elim, for 100 years of giving hope and help to every life that it has touched.

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*[Translation]***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 6, we launched Black History Month at the Canadian Museum of History.

I thank the Prime Minister for attending and for his warmly received speech. I also want to thank the Minister of Canadian Heritage, all my colleagues in the House from all parties, senators, and the hundreds of people from coast to coast who came all this way to mark the contribution of African Canadians.

This year, Viola Desmond was chosen to be featured on Canada's \$10 bill in recognition of her influence on the civil rights movement. We are also paying tribute to Mathieu Da Costa on the 2017 Canada Post stamp.

Diversity is our wealth. It is one of Canada's greatest assets. It is essential to our country's prosperity.

* * *

*[English]***TEXADA QUARRYING**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of the locked-out workers at Texada Quarrying on Texada Island.

Texada Quarrying is a profitable operation, owned by a multinational firm, LafargeHolcim. On October 17, the company locked out more than 60 workers after unsuccessful contract negotiations. Since that time, locked-out workers and their families have lived through a difficult holiday season and long winter.

It may come as a surprise to some members of the House that workers affected by labour disputes are not eligible for employment insurance. This simply does not make sense in the case of companies locking out workers.

New Democrats know that we must improve the employment insurance system so that it better meets the needs of working people in this changing economy. I believe it is high time for us to amend the EI Act so that workers affected by lockouts can access employment insurance benefits, the benefits workers have paid into for decades in some cases.

* * *

HENRY CHARLES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House today to remember Musqueam Elder Henry Charles who passed away January 28 early in the morning.

Henry Charles was a member of the Musqueam Band. He grew up on traditional territorial lands, adjacent to the University of British Columbia, that were home to the strong, united Musqueam people for thousands of years.

Henry Charles was a pioneer in recognizing the importance of preserving Hun'qumi'num', the local Musqueam language. As a native historian, storyteller, and official Musqueam speaker and greeter, Mr. Charles's effort to preserve and revitalize his traditional language celebrates his community's unique world view and preserves its traditional knowledge for future generations. He forged connections between storyteller and listeners that promoted literacy, the love of language, and intercultural understanding and appreciation between indigenous and non-indigenous people alike.

Beloved husband, father, grandfather, Henry was an exemplary elder and he will be dearly missed by all.

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●(1105)

EDMONTON

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the stars of Edmonton. Not to Connor McDavid, though I am very happy to have him wearing an Oilers jersey, I want to pay tribute instead to the many charities and organizations, especially in my riding of Edmonton West, that tirelessly serve our citizens.

They are organizations like the Maier Centre for Autism, where they are leading the country with new ways of helping children with autism and their families; the Elves Special Needs Society, where they help the disabled live their lives with love and dignity; Kids On Track, where they mentor children at risk to be future leaders; and Goodwill Alberta, training and employing the disadvantaged and the disabled so that they can enjoy full lives and look forward to a better future.

These and too many others to mention in just a minute are what make Edmonton and my riding of Edmonton West the heart of our city. I thank them and all their many volunteers and supporters for all they do day after day for the love and care of their fellow Edmontonians.

Yes, we do have Connor McDavid, but we have many greater stars in Edmonton.

*Statements by Members***SIERRA LEONE**

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 15, 1792, 15 ships filled with African Nova Scotians set sail from Halifax for the west coast of Africa in order to establish a new country called “Sierra Leone”. Most of these African Nova Scotians were former slaves who had fled America for Nova Scotia and were now hoping for a new life in Africa. These hardy souls established what is today Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone.

There are still homes in Freetown built the same way they were in Nova Scotia in 1792. There are still streets with Nova Scotia names. People can still name the Nova Scotia towns where their ancestors once lived. The amazing thing to me is that I knew nothing about this significant piece of Nova Scotia history until I visited Sierra Leone a few years ago on a parliamentary mission with the Speaker. I urge those who are interested in this incredible story to go to the Internet and search out “Nova Scotia settlers”, and this amazing story will unfold before their very eyes.

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[Translation]

COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Justice on restoring and modernizing the court challenges program. This important program allows Canadians to be heard when it comes to defining their rights and freedoms.

As the member of Parliament for a riding with the highest proportion of francophones outside Quebec, I am pleased with this announcement. Fifteen years ago, on February 1, 2002, the Franco-Ontarian community almost lost the only francophone university hospital in Ontario, the Montfort Hospital. Were it not for the court challenges program, the movement could not have stopped the Conservative government from closing this institution that is so essential to the development of the francophone community.

In 2006, the Conservative government decided to cut this program. It took one Prime Minister Trudeau to establish the program and another to restore it.

The modernized court challenges program reflects our government's commitment to better protecting human rights and official languages rights.

On behalf of minority language communities, thank you.

* * *

[English]

GREG HINTON

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to, and to pay condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of, Greg Hinton, vice-president and general manager of Bell Media Radio, Brockville and Kingston. He died January 24 after a two-year battle with cancer.

Greg was instrumental in the continued success of radio stations in those two communities. Over his 30-year career, he demonstrated a deep commitment to the broadcasting business and his communities.

He helped grow talented people who are serving across Canada today. In Brockville, he kept the city's only two local radio stations, JRFM and BOB FM, intensely community focused. In Kingston, his leadership has maintained one station at number one in the market, while growing a second station.

As well as his busy career, Greg was focused on helping his communities, and lent his enthusiastic support to many causes. He is survived by his wife Allison; daughters Jessica, Lyla, and Ivy; and son Joshua. He will be missed.

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[Translation]

51ST CANADIAN SKI MARATHON

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 51st Canadian ski marathon will take place this weekend in the beautiful riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

This event is North America's longest and oldest Nordic ski tour. The legendary Herman Smith-Johannsen, better known as Jackrabbit, participated in this marathon until the age of 105.

Participants of all ages can ski up to 160 kilometres between Lachute and Gatineau, passing through Montebello. This marathon is not a competition. There are no winners or losers. The main goal is personal achievement.

Skiers can participate individually or as a team and choose among five categories, one of which allows them to set their own goals and select which sections of the course they want to complete.

I would like to thank Frédéric Ménard and his team, as well as the many volunteers. Without them this event would not be possible.

* * *

●(1110)

JACQUES NADEAU

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Sergeant Jacques Nadeau who passed away on February 2 at the age of 95.

Sergeant Nadeau was fighting with his regiment, the Fusiliers Mont-Royal, on August 19, 1942, in Dieppe when he was captured. He was finally freed in 1945 and continued to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces until he retired in 1971.

I want to offer my sincere condolences to his family and friends. Sergeant Nadeau also had a family of comrades, the Fusiliers, and those who were with him in Dieppe that day. He lost a friend there, Robert Boulanger.

This year, we are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Dieppe raid, and we will always remember those who fought in that battle by land, air, and sea.

Thank you, Sergeant Nadeau.

Statements by Members

[English]

SKI DAY

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next Wednesday, February 15, is not only Flag Day but also ski day on the Hill.

This wonderful event provides an opportunity for parliamentarians to come together and recognize the importance of physical activity for Canadians, while enjoying some cross-country skiing and other winter activities.

Ski day on the Hill is also a fun way to raise awareness about National Health and Fitness Day, which takes place this year on June 3. I encourage all communities across Canada to proclaim National Health and Fitness Day and join us in making Canada the fittest nation on earth.

I would also like to thank Senator Nancy Greene Raine for her tireless work in putting this event together, and for her continued advocacy and promotion of physical health for Canadians.

As the critic for sport, I invite all Canadians to bundle up, head outside, and get active in whatever way works best for them. For those of us sitting long hours in these seats, I encourage members to get up off their behinds and join me in taking one activity off their Participation 150 Play List.

* * *

INUIT-CROWN PARTNERSHIP

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to be in Iqaluit yesterday with the Prime Minister, ministers of our government and Inuit leaders as we signed a declaration to create the Inuit-Crown partnership. This establishes a new chapter between Inuit and the Government of Canada. It includes the implementation of the Inuit land claims agreements, social development, and reconciliation between Inuit and the government.

As the new Inuit-Crown relationship moves forward, immediate action will be taken to address painful memories of the past, including relocations and the treatment of Inuit during the tuberculosis epidemic of the 1940s and the 1960s, including the many relocations from their historic communities and villages.

It will address the dark decades of residential schools and work together with Inuit to advance the strategy on reducing suicide and building stronger communities together.

The Inuit Nunangat declaration demonstrates the shared commitment of the renewed Inuit-Crown relationship between Inuit, Tapiriit and Kanatami and the Government of Canada, and it underscores the common goal of creating prosperity for all Inuit, which benefits all Canadians.

This is a proud and historic moment.

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CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in November last year, the BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition released its B.C. child poverty report, which shows the growing income inequality among B.C. families

that have one in five of our children living in poverty, a statistic that has not changed in two decades.

In my own riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the city of Duncan is highlighted as having the highest child poverty rate of 31% for an urban area in B.C. These are not alternative facts; they are a damning indictment of policy failures from successive Liberal and Conservative governments.

In fact, it was just recently that the Liberals shamefully voted against the creation of a national poverty reduction strategy.

It is a sad state of affairs when a country as wealthy as Canada continues to display these kinds of statistics. My colleagues and I in the NDP will never rest so long as poverty and inequality continue to exist in Canada.

* * *

● (1115)

ALL SENIOR CARE SENIORS GAMES

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to mark the All Senior Care Seniors Games. This is a yearly event held in early February at ASC Living Centres across Canada.

There are two such retirement homes in my riding of Perth—Wellington: Cedarcroft Place and McCarthy Place Retirement Residence.

Today marks the closing ceremonies of this year's seniors games, and across Canada residents and community members will be gathering to mark and celebrate the successes of our senior citizens.

Events include, walking the hallways, Wii bowling, billiards and bocce, Wii golf, shuffleboard and various card games. The ASC Senior Games are an opportunity for all residents to participate and socialize, no matter the activity level.

Healthy aging is important as our population ages, and the All Senior Care Senior Games help our senior citizens exercise their bodies and minds.

I would like to thank all the organizers at the All Senior Care Seniors Games on a successful year, and congratulate those who participated.

* * *

COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to congratulate the ministers of Canadian Heritage and Justice for their inspired announcement this week to reinstate and modernize the landmark court challenges program. While this instrumental program was unceremoniously shuttered by the previous government, I am proud that our government has fulfilled another campaign promise, and restored this vital tool for equality and justice.

Oral Questions

From helping clarify Métis-Crown relations in the landmark Daniels ruling to playing a vital role in the long legal struggle for same-sex rights and marriage equality, the court challenges program is a uniquely Canadian program that has repeatedly ensured we, as a society, fulfill our loftiest ideals and aspirations.

Our government is committed to helping Canadians better define their rights and freedoms enshrined in the charter. I am particularly proud of the fact that the modernized court challenges program will significantly reduce the systemic barriers to justice that many in our society, whether they be first nations, youth, immigrant communities, or the working class, too often face.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's meeting with the President must not turn into an episode of *The Apprentice*. One-fifth of our workers depend on Canada-U.S. trade for their jobs. Donald Trump wants to move those jobs south. The Liberals are working hard to help him.

New Liberal carbon taxes, payroll taxes, and taxes on small businesses are driving jobs out of our country. When will the government stop taxing jobs out of Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House know how important it is to support our economy in order to grow our middle class. All members of the House also know that it is important in that process to work toward sustainable development, development that will create clean growth, clean air, and clean water for this generation and future generations. All members of the House also know how important it is to ensure that the most vulnerable Canadians are protected and assisted in order to join our middle class.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal carbon tax will not only cost people their jobs; it will cost them a fortune. That is why the Liberals have censored Finance Canada documents showing the cost of the tax on the poor and the middle class.

Today we learned that the Minister of Finance also censored from his economic update projections showing that the deficits would continue well into 2050. Is the government's tax and borrow addiction so bad that it has to cover up its symptoms?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping the middle class and those working so hard to join it. The reports, which we tabled in an open and transparent way, show that our fiscal situation is sustainable over the long term. The report supports our plan to invest in the economy and grow the middle class.

As we implement this plan, we will make every dollar count, and we will be fiscally responsible with every decision we make.

●(1120)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is like a human Roomba, hovering in all directions, trying to vacuum up any money he can find. He started by borrowing twice as much as he promised, then gas taxes, payroll taxes, and higher small business taxes. Now he is trying to raise taxes by thousands of dollars on the soldiers who are fighting ISIS in the Middle East.

When will the government realize that its spending is the problem, and take its hands out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take this opportunity to provide reliable facts to the House, and to all Canadians. One thing that is certainly well known is that we have put into place a reduction in middle-class taxes, benefiting nine million middle-class taxpayers, and increasing taxes on the top 1% of Canadians. One thing that is also well known is that we have stopped sending cheques to families of millionaires, and increased family support to nine families out of 10.

These are not only strong figures, but extremely important figures for Canadians who want to confide in the will and the ability of our government to work for middle-class families.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cat is out of the bag. Members will recall that just hours before Christmas, the Department of Finance published a devastating report on this government's extremely bad management. The report indicated that, if nothing is done, Canada will be \$1.5 trillion in debt in 2050 and will not have a balanced budget until 2055. Today, we learned from *The Globe and Mail* that the minister was actually given the report on October 12 but that he kept it under wraps until just before Christmas. For 10 weeks, the Minister of Finance hid the report, which harshly criticizes the government's poor management of the public purse.

Why is the government hiding things from taxpayers?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The update of long-term economic and fiscal projections shows that our government's fiscal situation is sustainable over the long term. The analysis presented in the report supports our government's plan, which involves making sound decisions regarding investments in the economy for the middle class in order to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the Canadian economy.

Our government will continue to invest in the economy while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if it was that good, why did they keep the document under wraps for 10 weeks?

Because it is not that good. According to the projections, if the Liberals do not change course, there will be a deficit and the budget will not be balanced until 2055. The deficit will be \$1.5 trillion in 2050.

I do not really understand how they can see that as a good thing. If it were, they would have fallen all over themselves to release the document. That is exactly what did not happen. They kept it quiet for 10 weeks.

Why is the government so hypocritical?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Our government's priority is to focus on the middle class and those working hard to join it. Our government implemented the middle-class tax cut, we created the Canada child benefit, and we have helped seniors.

Our government is heading in the right direction, and we will keep going forward.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even though he broke his promise on electoral reform, the Prime Minister refused to apologize to Canadians. On top of that, he is trying to use misinformation to defend this betrayal. He said we need to keep our current voting method in order to prevent a right-wing government from coming to power. Really? A Conservative government in Canada?

My question is simple. Did the Prime Minister sleep right through the 10 years of the Stephen Harper government?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Democratic Institutions, it is my job to strengthen, enhance, and protect democracy in Canada. I look forward to working with all members of the House. Fundraising will be done in a more open and transparent manner in order to ensure that Canadians who are eligible to vote can do so. I look forward to working with everyone to improve Canadian democracy.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada is spreading alternative facts on democratic reform. According to the Prime Minister, it was not his fault that he broke his promise, it was the NDP's. Talk about desperate.

Let us talk about real facts. The current system provides 100% of the power to a party that gets 39% of the vote. The Prime Minister promised to change all that, and then he broke that promise.

Do the Liberals not understand that blaming everyone else for their broken promises is exactly what breeds cynicism in politics?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise today as the Minister of Democratic Institutions, because it is my job, in fact, as many members in this House know, to improve, to enhance, and to secure our democracy in this country.

Our job, as I have said time and time before, as leaders in our communities, as politicians, and those who care and are deeply embedded in the democratic process, is to do all that we can to combat cynicism, to encourage citizens to participate, and to ensure that everybody who has the right to vote has access to that vote.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is broken promise after broken promise with the government.

A new report from the David Suzuki Foundation states, "Almost one year after the budget announcement, the process for attaining clean and safe drinking water for First Nations remains flawed."

I wrote to the Prime Minister yesterday to thank him for his interest in our youth's storage capacity for canoes and paddles, but the real question here is, will the government respect its election promise to end water boiling advisories in all communities?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud of the relationship we have established with young indigenous Canadians across this country. We will continue to build on that relationship.

In terms of the Suzuki report released yesterday, I think it is important to note that our government stands by our commitment to end long-term drinking water advisories within five years. Already we have lifted 18 long-term drinking water advisories on first nations in this country that had not been dealt with in decades.

In addition, I want to point out that some of the projects highlighted in the report yesterday are near completion, despite what the report says.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to lift all 130 of them, not just 18.

[*Translation*]

This week the commissioners charged with overseeing the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women suggested that it was up to the families to decide whether to participate in the inquiry.

I have to wonder how many families know that it is up to them to contact the officials involved in the inquiry in order to participate. We have heard stories about how frustrated and confused the families are feeling.

Can the minister explain to us the changes that have been made to the inquiry process, in the spirit of greater transparency and inclusivity?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were very proud to meet our commitment to Canadians and launch a truly national independent inquiry into the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in this country.

In August of 2016, we announced the terms of reference that would guide the inquiry, and the five commissioners who have been appointed are now leading that process. We are hoping that this inquiry will also make recommendations on urgent action that is needed, such as the known root causes, with investments in women's shelters, housing, education, and children across indigenous Canada.

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HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked why the Liberals took away CMHC insurance when Canadian families refinance their mortgages. The talking point in response was about the mortgage stress tests and long-term affordability. My question had nothing to do with stress test changes. It is alarming that Liberals do not seem to know the difference between stress test requirements and taking away CMHC insurance for those who refinance.

Increasing interest costs on refinanced mortgages hurt middle-class Canadians and hurt affordability. Will the Liberals reverse this punitive and damaging change?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping the middle class and those working so hard to join it. We will continue to monitor the market to protect middle-class Canadians.

Our government is also taking a long-term view of the way that the mortgage markets are functioning, by reviewing the distribution of risk in mortgage lending. To support affordability in housing, we have committed \$2.3 billion in budget 2016 for affordable housing, and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development is leading the development of this national housing strategy.

Our government will continue to closely monitor the housing market, and we will continue to work with provinces and municipalities to tackle affordability and financial stability.

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• (1130)

*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been over a year since this government was elected, and already several campaign promises have been broken.

The Liberals can pat themselves on the back all they want and pretend that they put more money back in the pockets of nine out of 10 families, but the reality is that the middle class and families have less money now that the Liberals are in power.

This government wastes money like there is no tomorrow and is not creating any full-time jobs.

When will this Liberal government assume its responsibilities, start governing like a good parent, and stop putting Canadians further into debt?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am always happy to stand in the House and talk about the great things our government has done to help the middle class.

First, it was our government that lowered taxes for the middle class. Nine million Canadians benefited from that tax break, and yet the member's party voted against that bill.

Our government also introduced the Canada child benefit, which means, on average, \$2,400 more in the pockets of families every month. The member's party voted against that too.

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*[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of Albertans are out of work. There is a new crippling carbon tax on everything, and now apparently a plan to phase out world-class energy production. The oil sands provide 425,000 jobs for Canadians and partnerships with thousands of businesses across Canada. Every one job in the oil sands creates 2.5 jobs from coast to coast. Any other world leader would value this strategic asset and long-term energy security, but the Liberals have turned their backs on Alberta.

When will the Prime Minister finally champion Canadian energy and Canadian jobs?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we understand the challenges that workers and their families across the country in the energy sector have experienced over the past three years. We did in one year what the previous government could not do in a decade. We are protecting our oceans, we are pricing carbon pollution, all the while putting middle-class Canadians back to work.

We said that major pipelines could only get built if we had a price on carbon pollution and strong environmental protection in place. Our support for getting our resources to market reflects a balanced approach that ensures the environment is protected, a fair price for commodities is received, and creates good, well-paying jobs for Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been in office for a year and a half.

For a year and a half, the economy has been mismanaged, no full-time jobs have been created, and SMEs have been abandoned. What is the government's solution? It is overtaxing SMEs, which is cutting into their revenue and preventing them from hiring middle-class workers, all so that it can finance its out-of-control spending.

Why is the Prime Minister directly attacking those who contribute the most to our economy?

[English]

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government does understand the importance of small and medium-sized businesses. We understand that they are the backbone of the economy. They are proud of the work that they do, especially in the tourism industry where we have seen a boom of \$90 billion this summer for 192,000 small and medium-sized businesses. And they are small businesses.

Also, with the investments we have done in infrastructure, they, too, are small and medium-sized businesses. We are doing a lot to help them, and we will continue to do so.

• (1135)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, the chamber of commerce is worried about all the things the Liberals are doing to kill small business and eliminate job expansion, like the carbon tax, higher taxes for business, more regulation, and concerns about being uncompetitive with our neighbour south of the border. Then, when the Liberals could give us infrastructure money to create 3,000 jobs in my riding, the infrastructure minister has done nothing about it in a year and a half.

When will the Liberals put their money where they mouths are and support creation of jobs in my riding?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question, because it gives me an opportunity to remind the House that we have invested \$12 million in Sarnia—Lambton, in Bioindustrial Innovation Canada, for 478 jobs. This is a pattern that is repeating itself across the country, with the innovation ministry, with the infrastructure ministry. We are investing in Canadian technology. We are creating Canadian jobs, including in Sarnia—Lambton.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government funded over 500 infrastructure projects in Alberta, worth \$7 billion combined total funding, with provinces and municipal partners. Under the Liberals, only one announced project in Alberta has started construction. There is a serious job crisis.

Yesterday I did not get an answer from the minister, so I will ask it again. When will the Liberals uphold their promise and fast-track the \$700 million in infrastructure funds to Alberta?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we were elected on a platform to deliver a historic plan to invest in infrastructure. We are delivering on our commitment by investing more than \$180 billion in over 12 years to create long-term growth jobs for the middle class, create a low-carbon economy, a green economy, and improve social inclusion. In Alberta, we have approved 127 projects, which compares favourably to five projects announced in 2014 and two projects in 2013. We are busy building an economy while the party opposite spent 10 years deconstructing—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

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[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians, some of whom voted for the first time in the last election, voted for this Prime Minister because he promised to change our voting system.

They were deeply disappointed when the Prime Minister broke that promise last week, and understandably so. When elected officials break their promises, it serves only to fuel the cynicism of young Quebecers and Canadians.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to the young people who voted for him based on that promise and who may now lose all interest in politics?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said today, it is important that all members of the House and all of Canada's political leaders do everything they can to encourage young Canadians to participate in democracy. What is more, we introduced Bill C-33, which will create a register of young Canadians between the ages of 14 and 17. We know that once young people vote once, they vote for the rest of their adult lives.

We are taking steps to get young Canadians involved, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House in order to increase youth participation in our democracy.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, these broken promises are making young people feel disengaged, not more interested in participating.

In fact, a group of young people spoke publicly of their disappointment with this broken promise. It was the Liberal McGill group, which officially represents the Liberal Party of Canada at McGill University. They said, "Today's decision by [the] Prime Minister to remove electoral reform from the government's mandate is a crushing disappointment to the executive and membership of Liberal McGill."

What does the Prime Minister, who is also the Minister of Youth, have to say to his own membership?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we in the House all know, Canada is a democracy. In a democracy, we debate ideas. We have different positions and we are quite proud of the fact that here in the House we can debate several points of view with wisdom and respect, in order to encourage everyone to share their ideas. That is what we will continue to do to improve and strengthen the democratic tradition that we have here in Canada.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in an Order Paper question the defence minister said, “All Canadian Armed Forces personnel serving at all Operation IMPACT Kuwait locations received Tax Relief effective 5 Oct 2014...to 1 Sept 2016.” He misled the House yesterday when he blamed the former government. He took away their benefits. He did nothing to help them.

Why are the Liberals taking away our soldiers' benefits?

● (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his concern for our military personnel deployed abroad. As the minister said yesterday, we are committed to taking care of our soldiers, including their compensation. We want to make sure that tax measures are fair and equitable. That is why the minister asked the chief of the defence staff to work with the relevant agencies to review the compensation rules and propose changes, including finding ways to prevent negative impacts on deployed personnel.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are saving money by cutting the pay of soldiers deployed abroad. Those soldiers have no way to defend themselves. The Liberals know they are easy prey. Ruthlessly cutting the pay of our men and women in uniform who have been deployed to eradicate ISIS is despicable.

How could the minister, who is a veteran like me, consent to letting something like this go through? It is not like he was blindsided; we brought this to his attention in December.

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition critic himself said this yesterday:

The defence minister is a proud veteran, and he knows better than anyone how important danger pay is not just for our brave men and women in uniform but for their families back at home as well.

I could not have put it better myself. Then the minister responded as follows:

We have to work through a process to be able to resolve some of these issues. Many different departments are involved, and we are working [really hard] through it, and we will get through this.

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of Canadian veterans who are suffering permanent physical brain stem injuries as a result of mefloquine, the anti-malaria drug they were ordered to take, is growing daily. The veterans affairs minister must put veterans first and work toward a national registry to provide the evidence to diagnose and treat mefloquine toxicity.

Will the minister finally bring relief to the stigma and the pain of veterans who are suffering simply because they followed orders during their sacrifice and service to Canada?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces take the health and well-being of Canadian Forces members and veterans very seriously.

I thank the member opposite for her tireless efforts in working for veterans affairs.

While I cannot comment on specific cases, I do hope this individual looks after her health and consults with her doctor. We provide a range of services and programs to promote the welfare of those who become ill or injured in the line of duty, including disability and related health care benefits, rehabilitation services, financial benefits, and support to families.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that the parliamentary secretary heard the hon. member's questions.

Canada's allies have banned the use of the anti-malarial drug mefloquine. In fact, the veterans affairs committee wrote a letter to the Minister of Health to study the effects on November 18, 2016. The physiological and psychological effects on those who were given mefloquine during service are a cause for great concern within the veterans' community.

Will the Prime Minister direct the Minister of National Defence to follow the lead of our allies and ban the use of mefloquine not only for our soldiers but for their families as well?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and well-being of all Canadian Armed Forces members are critically important to our government. Malaria is an infectious disease that can endanger the lives of our military personnel, who can be exposed in the course of their duties.

Members of the military make personal decisions regarding malaria prevention in close co-operation with their health care professionals, based on an assessment and extensive medical information.

Oral Questions

The use of mefloquine in the Canadian Armed Forces is currently under review.

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[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development said the reason the Liberals have not delivered on their home care commitment is because of the provinces.

Let me read their home care promise from Liberal.ca, because apparently that is where the real promises live. It states, “As an immediate commitment, we will invest \$3 billion”.

It is 14 months later, and now it is the provinces' fault. When will the Liberals stop blaming others and finally come through on their commitment for home care?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our health care funding to the provinces will more than cover the rate of inflation and the GDP increase. We are offering to increase Canadian health transfers by nearly \$1 billion a year, not to mention another \$11.5 billion over the next 10 years specifically for home care and mental health.

I think this will meet the needs of Canadians in the areas of mental health care and home care. This has the potential to transform Canada's health care system.

* * *

● (1145)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, The Conference Board of Canada has released a report confirming the shortfall in infrastructure funding in northern and indigenous communities. The report states that a long list of northern and aboriginal concerns need to be addressed. We are talking about access to safe water, housing, roads, Internet, cell coverage, and power.

When will the Liberals acknowledge these rights and provide the urgently needed services?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question because I think it is very important to note that this is a government that takes investments into infrastructure in indigenous communities across Canada very seriously. This past year we have invested record amounts of money into housing, water, waste water, and other infrastructure needs both on reserve and in northern and indigenous communities. In fact, yesterday I happened to be in Nunavut with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs where they talked about the \$50-million investment in Nunavut alone to improve the housing conditions in that community. We will keep doing what we are—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Canadian Armed Forces operates in a wide variety of challenging and geographically diverse locations around the globe. Whether our forces are at home in Canada's North or abroad providing international humanitarian assistance and meeting our commitments to NORAD and NATO, they need to rely on the equipment our government provides them to get the job done.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement inform this House about recent investments made in support of our Canadian Armed Forces?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great news. Our government is committed to providing the men and women of the military the equipment they need to do their job, while providing well-paying jobs for the middle class and those working hard to join it. That is why yesterday our government announced the award of contracts totalling \$168 million to acquire new portable shelter systems for our military. These contracts will not only provide our military with the modern equipment it needs to do its job safely and securely in virtually any environment, at home or abroad, they will also create or maintain 160 good-paying jobs, and generate economic benefits for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a political controversy surrounding the procurement of the Super Hornet fighter jets.

At the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates yesterday, the Liberals refused to hold an emergency debate, even though that committee's mandate is to examine procurement contracts. The goal is to ensure that everything is done by the book and that Canada's Government Contracts Regulations are followed.

Will the Liberal government allow our committee to do its job on these important matters and will it respect the parliamentary process?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the good news does not stop there.

Our government announced its decision to launch an open and transparent competition to replace the entire fleet of CF-18s shortly after the results of the defence review were released.

Oral Questions

This competitive process will help ensure that the members of the Canadian Armed Forces have the best aircraft for the long term, while getting the best value for money and generating the most economic benefits possible for Canadians.

All aircraft manufacturers that meet the requirements can submit a tender. We will deliver—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Edmonton West.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals used their majority in committee to shamefully shut down a study on the Boeing F-18 Super Hornet sole-source purchase. The procurement minister's own mandate from the Prime Minister states, "Government and its information should be open by default". In case members were not listening, that was "open by default".

The minister is cynically ignoring these instructions. Why is she blocking information about the Super Hornet purchase from Canadians?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to prove that good news can be transmitted in both official languages, I just want to tell members that our government announced the decision to undertake an open and transparent competition to replace the full CF-18 fleet shortly following the results of the defence policy review. This will provide our men and women in uniform with the right aircraft for the long term, at the right price, and with the right economic benefits for Canadians. Any aircraft that meets the requirement can bid in the competition.

The good news keeps coming for our men and women in uniform.

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● (1150)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk a little about Phoenix. The parliamentary secretary and his minister have been providing very poor leadership.

First, the minister never admitted that she made a mistake by implementing the Phoenix pay system in February 2016.

Second, she is not taking responsibility for the situation. Instead, she is sending the deputy minister to all of the press conferences.

Third, since the fiasco began, the minister has been trying to minimize the seriousness of the crisis, which is affecting thousands of Canadian families.

When will the minister show some political courage in this matter?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have never seen a minister do so much. She is working hard to solve a problem that we inherited from the previous government.

I cannot believe that members across the floor have the nerve to ask us questions about this massive problem they created. The minister has put measures in place and is going to resolve the problem. We are going to fix the problems with Phoenix and public servants will get paid.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a year of missed deadlines, tens of millions of overpayments, endless talking points, as we see here, the Liberal Phoenix fiasco is getting worse. Now the Liberals are failing public servants on maternity and disability, with 80% of recipients not receiving their pay on time. Does the member have a talking point for the 80% that are missing?

When will the Minister of Public Services stop hiding behind her deputy minister, take responsibility, and fix the Liberal Phoenix fiasco?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must tell members that I am little incredulous vis-à-vis a political party that left us a legacy of a failed project that this minister, that this Prime Minister, that this department is working overtime, around the clock, to fix.

We will fix the problems in Phoenix. I can reassure the member that public servants will get paid, overpayments will be corrected, and public servants will enjoy a modern pay system, but it is no thanks to the Conservatives.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Liberals announced the revival of the court challenges program. This program will fund court challenges based on freedom of religion, democratic rights, liberty, and security.

Restoring this program is a good step that is long overdue, but the government should enshrine it in law. Liberals need to keep their promise to stop fighting first nations families, veterans, and mothers in court.

I have a simple question for the minister. Will the Liberals enshrine this program in law so that these groups and future groups can access justice and keep fighting for fairness, and when will they do it?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting human rights and official languages rights. In the context of the cross-country consultations on official languages, Canadians highlighted the importance of ensuring access to the legal system, which is why we reinstated the court challenges program, a program that has made a real difference in the lives of Canadians.

Oral Questions

In order to get the program up and running right away, it was important to do it in the way that it has been done. The possibility of enshrining it into law is one that could be considered at a later date. However, in order to get these rights available to be supported, it has been necessary to do it in the way that it has been done.

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CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been promising action on solving the abandoned vessel problem since they first took office. Coastal communities are tired of waiting. Boats are still sinking. We need a strong system to stop oil spills on our coast.

It is time that this ship sails, and it is time that the Coast Guard receives the resources and the broader mandate it needs to do its job. When will the government float this boat and take action on solutions to protect B.C.'s coast?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that almost sounds like a planted question. It gives me an opportunity to tell the member that this ship sailed, in fact in November.

When our Prime Minister was in British Columbia, I was in St. John's, Newfoundland. We announced a historic investment in the Canadian Coast Guard in partnership with Transport Canada.

Our oceans protection program is one of the most innovative and complete packages ever announced to protect marine ecosystems, to ensure that in the event of an oil spill all of the resources are on site and available to clean it up quickly and, more important, to prevent it. I know that member will want to celebrate this with us.

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● (1155)

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since introducing my private member's bill, Bill C-211, I have heard from hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals who are in the fight of their lives. There is no standard diagnosis or care for PTSD that is consistent from the east coast to the west coast. Our first responders, our veterans, and our firefighters, who have sacrificed so much for our country, are not receiving the proper care and support needed to deal with PTSD.

Lives are at stake. My simple question is this. Can we count on the Prime Minister and his Liberal caucus to support Bill C-211 when it is voted on at second reading, yes or no?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, taking care of our troops is very important. The Canadian Armed Forces are determined to improve treatment for soldiers suffering from PTSD. The CAF recently invested \$2.65 million over four years in state-of-the-art brain imagery technology that will contribute to mental health research.

Military personnel are encouraged to seek help for their symptoms at any time. They are also subject to individual medical testing to screen for signs of PTSD, among others.

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*[English]***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why has the government ended the practice of prioritizing persecuted Iranian LGBT as refugees to Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year we welcomed 40,000 refugees. That includes 25,000 resettled refugees, which is double what the previous government brought.

We take seriously our refugee commitment to ensure that it is compassionate and focused on the most vulnerable people. We work very closely with the UN refugee agency and private sponsors to continue to identify the most vulnerable, and that obviously includes members of the LGBTQ2 community.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, LGBT in Iran are beaten, tortured, and executed, all while being sanctioned under the law, simply for who they are and for whom they love. To me, that is the definition of the most vulnerable.

The minister did not answer the question. The minister used the talking point of 25,000 Syrian refugees. I am talking about the practice of allowing and prioritizing Iranian LGBT refugees coming to Canada. Why are the Liberals turning their backs on the most vulnerable, and no talking points, please?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lessons from the previous government when it comes to identifying, welcoming and being compassionate to those most vulnerable, as well as refugees in need of resettlement. We work very closely with the UN refugee agency to ensure that we continue to identify those in the most need for resettlement, which obviously includes members of the LGBTQ2 community.

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*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities recently announced a support project for towns in Jordan exposed to migratory pressures in the wake of the Syrian conflict.

Can the minister tell the House how the government is helping these towns cope with what has become one of the largest migratory crises ever witnessed?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in the importance of developing local capacity, including developing the capacity of nearby governments. Our government is supporting the towns in developing countries that are welcoming tens of thousands of refugees in order to help them maintain stability in their region.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities project in Jordan will help a dozen municipalities manage their public services including by advancing and involving women in leadership.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives support tougher sentences and penalties for human trafficking.

Through Bill C-38, the Liberals are shamelessly attempting to remove consecutive sentencing for human trafficking offenders. They are delaying taking action to combat this serious issue. We know the Liberals' track record of putting offenders ahead of the rights of victims. The minister claims to be compassionate for vulnerable people.

When will the minister take concrete action to empower survivors of human trafficking and protect victims?

● (1200)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to ensuring that we do the right thing to protect victims and to combat human trafficking, the victims of which are among society's most vulnerable.

The bill introduced by the Minister of Justice yesterday would give law enforcement and prosecutors new tools to investigate and prosecute certain human trafficking offences that could be particularly difficult to prove. It would also strengthen Canada's criminal law and respond to trafficking of persons in a manner that would be consistent with the charter.

Bill C-38 would bring into force private member's Bill C-452, with amendments, to better protect victims, while at the same time ensuring consistency with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after Juno Award nominees were announced this week, fans of Canadian music are gearing up for an awesome party in Ottawa on April 2.

However, let us not forget that, once again, Canadian artists are also well-represented among the nominees for the 59th annual Grammy Awards taking place this Sunday in Los Angeles. Indeed, Canadian artists have started from the bottom and now they are here, across the world, from Montreal to Hong Kong, from Bangkok to Babylon. From hip-hop to indie rock, folk, jazz, and country, to pop chart toppers, Canada is known for the diversity of its homegrown talent.

Could the government provide the members of the House with an update on the state of Canadian recording artists on the international scene?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the music lover from Pontiac for that question.

Canada has a reputation for itself when it comes to music. Members might ask “What Do You Mean?” Well, Drake, Justin Bieber, and The Weeknd are in the top 10 global recording artists of 2016. The world is saying, “Canada, baby, I like your style”.

When it comes to our music roster, we have a “really big team”, and we should go “tell your friends” about it. Our government is proud to “take care” of our recording artists. We have no reason to be “Sorry” for our dominance of the music charts, and look forward to more success in 2017.

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SEALING INDUSTRY

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the selling of sealskins has been an important economic driver for remote Inuit communities for hundreds of years.

Through media campaigns and false information, activists have destroyed the international market for sealskins, dealing a crippling blow to those communities, which already face the highest rates for poverty and unemployment in the country.

The European Union's 2008 ban on seal skin products was extremely damaging. When the Prime Minister addresses the European Parliament next week, will he demand that it drop the ban and stand up for Inuit communities?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we, too, share his support for the Canadian sealing industry, for the Inuit communities, for fishers from all parts of the country who have in fact benefited from a sustainable and appropriate harvest of seals.

We think Canadian seal products are among the best in the world. It is a humane hunt that is conducted in many parts of the country, and has been for decades. We will always tell the world about the importance of a sustainable seal hunt. I thank the member for an opportunity to remind the House of our support for the seal hunt.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Yassine Aber was supposed to go to Boston yesterday with the Université de Sherbrooke's Vert et Or team for a track meet. American border guards interrogated him for six hours about his religion and his parents' Moroccan origins, then turned him back.

When the Prime Minister meets with Donald Trump on Monday, what will he do to make sure that no Quebecker is treated as a second-class citizen just because his name is Yassine?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the member opposite. Let me assure him that we will work to ensure that all Canadians receive fair and proper treatment.

I would encourage members of the House, if there is an incident that they become aware of that causes them concern, to bring it to our attention. Obviously, a number of these issues are emerging. We will take a look at the situation. We will be happy to get back to the member. Again, I appreciate him bringing it to our attention.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what the Prime Minister will do about it: not a thing.

This morning, against the backdrop of the Prime Minister's upcoming visit to Washington, Agropur expressed concern that our dairy producers could be used as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations with Donald Trump. The co-operative has every reason to be concerned.

The government has been in power for over a year, but it has not settled any of these issues with the United States. Its strategy for defending our interests boils down to this: do nothing. Do nothing about diafiltered milk. Do nothing about softwood lumber.

Can the government confirm that it will keep doing what it has been doing since the start to protect us, in other words, nothing?

• (1205)

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rest assured that our government will continue to stand up for Quebec farmers and producers and their families.

Our government will always protect the interests of Canadians and Quebecers, their jobs, and our products. We will staunchly defend our national economic interests, and we will continue to promote Canadian values.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we speak, an anti-democracy trial is being held in Spain.

Artur Mas, the former Catalan prime minister, could face a 10-year ban on holding public office for holding a referendum on independence, and the speaker of Catalan's parliament, Carme Forcadell, faces charges for allowing the parliament to vote on this issue. They are guilty of allowing debate.

Will the federal government remind the Spanish government that all peoples, including the Catalan people, have the right to self-determination and that it considers this political trial against Catalan separatists to be unacceptable?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

As in any situation, our officials are in contact with their counterparts around the world. This government remains firm in its position that we must promote human rights around the world and we make that known in every one of our conversations with our international counterparts.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The climate change accord was signed this past December by Nunavut's premier, Peter Taptuna. As a territory, Nunavut relies heavily on carbon fuel for air transportation and is 100% reliant on diesel energy. In addition, it is no secret that Nunavut has the highest cost of living, unemployment, and poverty in the country.

In recognition of Nunavut's unique circumstances, will the minister ensure that carbon pricing will not increase the cost of living for Nunavummiut and work with the territory to ensure cost neutrality?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Nunavut for his question and for his advocacy on behalf of Nunavummiut.

The Prime Minister was in Iqaluit this week. Our government is very committed to working with the Government of Nunavut to ensure we tackle climate change. In no place have we seen greater impacts of climate change than in the north, where hunters are falling through the ice because they can no longer tell the thickness.

We need to be doing more. We are committed to working with the government in pricing pollution to ensure that all revenues are returned to the Government of Nunavut, and that we design a solution that works for the people of the north.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we conclude question period for today, I would just like to remind all hon. members of the conventions we use in the House pertaining to directing members' questions, comments, and or remarks to the Chair.

This is a long-established convention that we use in the House and it avoids hon. members getting to the point of expressing their comments in the second person; that is to say using the word "you" and directing comments directly across the aisle. This helps to keep the comportment of the chamber on track. Let us say that there is enough controversy at times that we do not need to use those extra measures to provoke disorder in the House.

*Government Orders***POINTS OF ORDER**

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to offer the House an apology. During my question to the Minister of Justice, my iPad was in front of me, which has an “I support the oil sands” sticker. It was not meant as a prop, and I apologize to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his notice to the House in that regard. For the benefit of all other members, props are prohibited in the House for that purpose.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1210)

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, a report to the Canadian section of the ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the 41st board of directors meeting at the 13th plenary assembly of the ParlAmericas held in Mexico City, Mexico, from December 5 to 7, 2016.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Health in relation to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments to other acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

At this time, I want to thank all members of the health committee who worked diligently to get this through in an appropriate time. Although there were some philosophical differences, everyone appreciated the sense of urgency and helped to get the bill through. I want to thank all members from all parties for their co-operation on this bill. We think that this bill will save lives.

* * *

PETITIONS

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by dozens of people right across Canada. The petitioners recognize that only 26% of the seats in the House of Commons are held by women and that we are 64th in the world when it comes to electing women to Parliament.

Last year, the government joined with the Conservatives to vote down my private member's bill that would have incentivized political parties to elect more women in Parliament. I noticed that the electoral reform committee also recommended that these kinds of measures be brought in.

The petitioners are asking that the Liberals move ahead with these petitions and prove that they are not fake feminists.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if a supplementary response to Question No. 648, originally tabled on January 30, 2017, could be made an order for return, that return would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 648—**Mr. Bob Saroya:**

With regard to appointments to federal boards, agencies, and associations since November 4, 2015, for each appointment: what is the name, province, and position of the appointee?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

The NDP is pleased to support the Canada-Ukraine agreement, because it is actually about trade. Canada currently runs a modest trade surplus with Ukraine, and we see a real potential for this deal, by removing tariffs to build upon that trade relationship to create jobs in Canada, and to make a contribution to the economy of the Ukraine as well. This is exactly the kind of agreement that the NDP is happy to support.

As members know, we are opposed to the agreement between Canada and the European Union. With the European Union, Canada currently runs a massive trade deficit, which would likely be enlarged by the agreement that would be a detraction from our economy and from employment in our country. That trade deficit is even larger, if we assume that the United Kingdom will be removed from the agreement as a result of Brexit.

Government Orders

There is a real contrast between these two agreements, in terms of the trade relationships that exist and that the agreements would likely amplify. However, an even bigger distinction has to do with the non-trade aspects of the Canada-Europe deal. The Canada-Europe agreement would extend the duration of pharmaceutical patents, which would drive up the price of prescription drugs for provincial health care systems, as well as for individual Canadians.

We are very pleased to note that those provisions are not present in the Canada-Ukraine deal, which gives us comfort in supporting it. We also note that the Canada-Europe agreement includes investor-state provisions, which empower foreign investors to directly challenge our democratic laws, regulations, and public policies, not in the regular court system, but in a special set of commercial tribunals to which most other sectors of society do not have access.

Again, we are very pleased with the fact that the Canada-Ukraine agreement does not include these pernicious investor-state provisions. Again, this makes us quite comfortable in supporting it.

Before question period, I asked the member for Calgary Nose Hill about why the Conservatives believe it is so important to have investor-state provisions in the Canada-Europe agreement. Given that Canada and Europe both have well-functioning court systems, it is not obvious to me why we would need to set up these special tribunals for Canadian investors in Europe, or European investors in Canada. I did not get much of an answer to this question from the member for Calgary Nose Hill. There really was not an explanation as to why the Conservatives, or the Liberal government, for that matter, feel it is important to have investor-state provisions in the Canada-Europe deal.

However, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, in response, did suggest that the NDP not reflexively supporting anything and everything called a free trade agreement somehow puts us in the same camp as the Trump administration, and challenged me to explain our positions on trade vis-à-vis those of President Trump. I would like to take the opportunity to address that.

Mr. Trump has identified several real problems that exist with American trade. He has called attention to the problem of Chinese steel, produced in violation of internationally recognized environmental and labour standards, being dumped into the U.S. market, to the detriment of the American steel industry and American steelworkers.

We have exactly the same problem here in Canada with Chinese steel being dumped into our markets. My sense is that we need to work with the United States, and indeed with the Trump administration, to formulate a North America solution for this problem. If we do not do that, if the United States acts alone against Chinese steel dumping, a lot of that steel will be diverted into the Canadian market, which would hurt our industry and our steelworkers even more.

Worse yet, if Canada allows itself to be a conduit for dumped Chinese steel, we could make ourselves a target for American trade retaliation. That would be disastrous, given that our steel industries are quite integrated across the Canada-U.S. border, and given that the steel trade is quite large and balanced between our two countries.

● (1215)

As someone who serves on the all-party steel caucus, I am going to try to work toward a North American solution to the problem of Chinese steel dumping rather than running the risk of Canada falling victim to the Trump administration's efforts to address this quite real and serious problem.

Now, on the topic of steel dumping, this is an issue with Ukraine as well. Ukraine has quite a significant steel industry, but, unfortunately, it does not have the kind of labour and environmental standards that all countries should respect. There is a problem with the dumping of Ukrainian steel as well. A few months ago, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal renewed anti-dumping duties on Ukrainian steel in recognition that the problem persists.

This is an issue that gives me some pause with the Canada-Ukraine trade deal. However, I am still confident in supporting it, because this deal importantly allows Canada to continue with trade remedy policies. This agreement does not impair our ability to apply anti-dumping and countervailing duties when necessary against Ukrainian steel. I think this agreement safeguards our industry and allows the Canadian government to continue to offset unfair competitive advantages achieved in Ukraine by violating internationally recognized labour and environmental standards. That is an important thing.

On the topic of dealing with the Trump administration on trade policy, in a much broader way, Trump has suggested renegotiating NAFTA. This is clearly a threat to Canada in some ways, but it is also an opportunity. I would note that there are aspects of NAFTA that are problematic, that do not work well for Canada, and that we should seek to fix in any potential renegotiation.

I spoke earlier about investor-state provisions and the problems created when we empower foreign investors to directly challenge policies that allegedly deprive them of some potential profit. We have seen a lot of those problems play out under NAFTA. We have the famous AbitibiBowater case. That company shut down its last pulp and paper mill in Newfoundland and Labrador. In response, the provincial government reclaimed water rights that it had given to AbitibiBowater to operate those mills. The company turned around and sued Canada under NAFTA for the loss of those water rights, even though it was not using them anymore to produce pulp and paper in that province.

The former Conservative government ended up paying AbitibiBowater millions of dollars to settle that. Clearly, investor-state provisions are a problem, and clearly chapter 11 is a part of NAFTA that is not working. I think very high on the Canadian agenda in any renegotiation of NAFTA needs to be to remove chapter 11.

Government Orders

We have also had a lot of debates in the House about pipelines, about being able to export Canadian resources to different markets. NAFTA actually restricts that through the proportionality clause. It locks Canada in to making a certain proportion of our energy resources, not just oil and gas, but also electricity, available to the United States. Removing the proportionality clause from NAFTA is another thing that Canada needs to be pushing for in our negotiations with the Trump administration.

A lot of Canadians are fearful of this whole idea of renegotiation of NAFTA. There is a sense that if it does not work out, if Trump tears up NAFTA, then we will not have anything, that our whole trade relationship with the United States will be at risk. Happily, if we get into that eventuality, we still have the original Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, which is a deal that is much more similar to the agreement we are currently debating with Ukraine. It is an agreement that removes tariffs. It is an agreement that gives us tariff-free access to the U.S. market without including these pernicious investor-state provisions.

• (1220)

Given that we can fall back on the original Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, Canada should be quite bold and should push quite hard in renegotiating NAFTA to fix it and remove those elements we do not like, because as I said, the alternative is something much better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation, because it is healthy for both Ukraine and Canada.

I was so pleased that the President of Ukraine gave a speech in this beautiful chamber. In his speech he talked about building on the relationship between our two countries. He also made reference to the idea of a trade agreement.

One could be proud that we have this legislation before us today. Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, all Canadians, in fact, will be quite pleased with the passage of this legislation.

The member is trying to justify why he is voting for this agreement but not for the European trade agreement. I would remind the member that the NDP has voted against other trade agreements that did not have what he referenced, which is the ability to sue.

I am going to take this at face value. The reason New Democrats are going to vote for this legislation is much in the same way as I just indicated. Would the member not agree with that?

• (1225)

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, I would note that NDP members have said very clearly and consistently for a long time that we object to investor-state provisions in trade agreements. When we are presented with trade agreements that do not include those provisions, we are much more likely to be able to support them. There are other provisions in trade agreements we would also look at and that would also affect our decision.

Whereas the Liberals and the Conservatives will automatically and reflexively support anything that is called a free trade agreement without weighing the pros and cons, how it will affect different sectors, or what other elements it includes, the NDP takes a very

cautious, case-by-case approach. We try to evaluate the specific provisions of an agreement. We look at how it will affect different parts of our economy. We make the decision that way.

That is how middle-class Canadians, who the member references, would want our government to consider trade agreements. That is the approach we have taken in this case. Based on those types of careful deliberations, we are pleased to support the Canada-Ukraine agreement.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to Bill C-31, the legislation that would implement the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. As members may have heard, the NDP supports the bill, and I will be speaking in favour of it.

First of all, I and the rest of my colleagues are very much in favour of strengthening Canada's trading relationships with the rest of the world. We in Canada are a trading nation.

Second, as other speakers have mentioned here today, Canada and Ukraine have a long-standing friendship. It is in both countries' interest to promote peaceful ways to maintain that important relationship.

Third, this agreement will benefit Canadian exporters without negatively impacting important Canadian values, such as labour rights and environmental protections.

Getting back to some general comments on trade, we in the NDP are very much in favour of trade agreements with other countries, as I mentioned and as my colleague for Regina—Lewvan just said. We have supported two of the three bills on trade agreements that have been brought before this Parliament.

We support agreements that actually benefit Canadian workers and the general public, as opposed to CETA, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union, which has the investor-state provisions just mentioned and which would raise the cost of pharmaceutical products in Canada. These are things that would not benefit Canadians in general.

I am happy to say that for Bill C-31, the government actually respected the usual practice of tabling the bill 21 days after signing the agreement so that parties could have some time to evaluate it, unlike what it did with CETA, which it tabled at more or less at the same time it signed the treaty.

Bill C-31 would eliminate tariffs on 86% of Canadian exports to Ukraine and would eliminate almost all tariffs on Ukrainian exports to Canada. Many Canadian exporters, including those trading in steel, machinery, agricultural products, such as beef, pork, and canola, and fish, all products Canada excels in producing and trades extensively in, will benefit from the elimination of these tariffs.

Government Orders

We are happy to support this agreement, because it has a strong labour chapter with comprehensive and enforceable provisions. This could really improve labour standards in Ukraine. The NDP obviously likes trade agreements that improve labour standards around the world and generally opposes those that bring labour standards down to the lowest common denominator.

As an ecologist, I am pleased to also see that this agreement has a strong environment chapter, with commitments to not lowering levels of protection. Again, we do not want to join the rest of the world and move things down to the lowest common denominator. We want to bring the standards around the world up to our standards here in Canada.

I, and many others, have been disappointed with several of the major agreements Canada has signed that have investor-state dispute mechanisms. They include CETA, which I just mentioned, and the TPP, which has not come before us but has been debated here. They have dispute mechanisms that allow foreign corporations to sue the federal government, provincial governments, and municipal governments when they bring in legislation to help protect our environment or our social values. Canadians are tired of hearing news stories about legal actions that cost Canadians hundreds of millions of dollars because we have chosen to protect our clean air and water.

Canadians are also in favour of provisions that protect some level of local procurement. My colleague for Kootenay—Columbia mentioned that mayors and councils like to buy local and promote local businesses. It is heartening to see that open access to municipal procurements and school board procurements are not part of this agreement.

I mentioned earlier Canada's long friendship and close ties with Ukraine. There are 1.3 million Ukrainian Canadians living in this country. Canada was the first western country to recognize the independence of Ukraine in 1991. This agreement offers an opportunity to strengthen that relationship.

●(1230)

As we all know, Ukraine is suffering tumultuous times and facing Russian aggression on its borders. When the crisis developed in 2014, the NDP firmly supported Ukraine and called on the federal government for more financial aid for Ukraine and stronger sanctions against Russia. This agreement sends an important signal to the world, and to Ukraine and Russia in particular, that Canada supports Ukraine and seeks to promote peace and prosperity in the region.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Zenon Potoczny, the president of the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce, who said:

This agreement will create additional jobs for citizens in both countries and lay new foundations for trade, growth, and investment. It also sends a very powerful message to the rest of the world that Ukraine is open for business, and Canada again lends a supportive hand to Ukraine.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems everyone today is behind this particular trade agreement with Ukraine.

To turn our attention to other trade agreements, we have heard comments about some of the ones that have come before the House that the member has not liked quite as well. I wonder if he has any

comments about upcoming NAFTA renegotiations and what he would like to see happen.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, again, one of the obvious things I and the rest of my colleagues in the NDP would like to see if NAFTA is opened for renegotiation is the elimination of the chapter 11 investor-state dispute mechanism.

We see news reports of California companies suing Canada or a province for hundreds of millions of dollars because we have chosen to protect our export of water. Things like that really affect Canadians, and that is what we do not like to see in these free trade agreements. We are all about trade, but we would like to be able to protect our environment. When we do, we want to be able to protect ourselves from flagrant litigation by foreign companies against our governments. Not only the federal government but provincial governments, cities, and towns can be sued. That is one of the main things we would like to see changed in NAFTA.

●(1235)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could speak to the conditions in Ukraine. We all support this trade agreement, but how can we help with the Ukrainian refugee issue?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, as I say, Canada and Ukraine have a long-standing relationship. We want to protect Ukraine. We want to see it prosper and return to a peaceful state.

There are many issues in and around Ukraine, especially with Russian aggression on its borders. Through mechanisms such as this, we can provide some assistance to Ukraine, both financially and by helping Ukraine grow its economy and get conditions within the country back to a stable level. That is how we will help protect Ukraine. It is a very complex, difficult situation, but this agreement is one of the things we can do to help, in our way, to bring peace and stability to that region.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask if my colleague can talk more about the environmental benefits of this trade agreement and also about what is at risk when the Government of Canada signs trade deals in which investor-state dispute resolution mechanisms are included that encourage lawsuits against Canada when our environmental standards are higher than those of the countries with which we sign trade agreements.

Government Orders

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, without going into any details, the main provision in this trade agreement is that on environmental protections and standards, there is a commitment to not lower those standards. We would maintain standards where they are now instead of moving down to the lowest common denominator. That is the kind of thing we need to see in trade agreements whenever we sign them with other countries. We want the other countries to at least maintain our commitment to environmental protection.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Today we are debating Bill C-31, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine. Well, it is about time.

This is something our previous Conservative government worked hard to successfully negotiate on July 14, 2015. No government has done more to support Ukraine during its crisis than the previous Conservative government. We were the first G7 country to visit Ukraine following the beginning of the crisis, and ensured the relationship continued to grow and to prosper.

I was very proud and happy to accompany former Prime Minister Harper on this visit to see first-hand the Maidan for myself, to see the area where those brave souls lost their life. It really cemented the need to continue our friendship and leadership with Ukraine in the world.

Now, because of the enormous security and economic challenges still facing the Ukrainian people today, Canada must remain a trusted partner during their time of need.

I come from Oshawa, and I am extremely proud of Mr. Harper and to have been part of the government. I know the impact Ukrainian Canadians have had on the development of Oshawa and our great nation. This is profoundly evident in my home community where Ukrainian Canadians have made immeasurably contributions to the vibrancy of my community.

Over the years, they have built several community halls in Oshawa, like the Dnipro, the LVIV, and Odessa. These are places where weddings, birthdays, and anniversaries are celebrated with all members of our community. These gathering places play an important role in Oshawa's annual fiesta week, for example. This is one of the largest multicultural festivals in Canada, and we have it right in Oshawa.

These are places to experience the Ukrainian culture, dance, and of course their food. There is also St. George the Great Martyr Ukrainian Catholic Church. In fact, if any of my colleagues are around this weekend, they can drop in by LVIV for St. George's annual trivia night this Saturday, February 11, 6:30 in the evening.

When the crisis and aggression began, I was proud to work with the Ukrainian leaders in my community. I was proud to work with my colleague, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman on the Oshawa United for Ukraine fundraiser at LVIV just a few years ago, where we were able to announce legal aid services for the most vulnerable in Ukraine. I want to thank the community organizers, people like Walter Kish from the Durham branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and volunteers like Daria, odarka, and Darlene.

Oshawa has such a proud Ukrainian history. We were home to the first Ukrainian Canadian cabinet minister, Michael Starr, who also served as Oshawa's mayor. MP Starr is remembered by many for his efforts to make the national employment service more humane in its approach to the unemployed, extending unemployment insurance benefits to women and to seasonal workers.

There are many other amazing Ukrainian Canadian families in my riding. Take for example the Lysyk family. They came from Ukraine, and now are some of the most prominent landlords, dentists, chiropractors, and business owners in my community. They have truly worked to build Oshawa into the great city it is today.

As I mentioned, someone like Walter Kish, who works tirelessly to build the Ukrainian Canadian community and create direct links with Ukraine. Whether it is serving on the board of the national or local branch of Ukrainian Canadian Congress, or working to expand the Ukrainian Credit Union, Walter is always working for his community.

We cannot forget community leaders like Carol Shewchuk, who, thanks to her great efforts, raised awareness of the Holodomor and what happened in the past.

Canada truly has a great partnership and friendship with Ukraine. That is why it is so important that all parties are in support of this agreement. It will not only continue to improve our relationship and show our continued support for Ukraine, especially at this time, but will have many economic and social benefits for both our countries. This agreement will not only strengthen the Canada-Ukraine partnership in peace and prosperity, but it will immediately eliminate duties on 99.9% of respected current imports when this agreement comes into force in Canada.

This will also allow Ukraine to eliminate approximately 86% of tariffs on Canadian goods, including industrial products, fish and seafood, and agricultural goods.

● (1240)

In 2011 to 2015, the total bilateral merchandise trade between Canada and Ukraine averaged \$289 million per year, and is expected to expand 19% as a result of this agreement.

Canada's GDP would increase \$29.2 million under the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. Similarly, Ukraine's GDP would expand \$18.6 million.

Our exports to Ukraine would increase \$41.2 million, which would include gains in pork, machinery and equipment, transport equipment, other manufactured goods, motor vehicles and parts, and chemical products. Under our previous Conservative government, we were also able to export \$35.5 million worth of agriculture and agrifood, and seafood products to Ukraine.

Government Orders

This agreement has substantial economic benefits for both Canada and Ukraine. The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would have numerous benefits, including preferential market access for Canadian exports, and increased visibility for other commercial opportunities. It would also facilitate enhanced co-operation, improve Canada's ability to resolve trade irritants, increase transparency in regulatory matters, and help to reduce transaction costs for businesses. This agreement also commits both Canada and Ukraine to respect and promote internationally recognized labour rights and principles.

This agreement is the fruition of our previous Conservative government's hard work. On July 14, 2015, Prime Minister Harper and Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk announced the successful conclusion of negotiations on CUFTA. This agreement reiterated the commitment of jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity, the key pillars of our economic action plan. Our party's pro free trade plan aims to diversify trade and enable companies to benefit from new opportunities abroad.

Having this agreement in place also gives us the opportunity for future business. I know that in my community of Oshawa there are many people in the energy business. We have had great leaders in the nuclear business. Ukraine and Canada also share vast resources, whether through natural gas or oil. In the future, we have a great opportunity for human resources in these technologies to go from one country to the other to learn and promote peaceful energy trade throughout the world.

I am proud to have been part of a government that worked hard to promote free trade in our country, and to be part of a party that believes in the importance of a strong relationship with Ukraine, both economically and socially.

I am proud to support this agreement, an agreement that our previous Conservative government ensured would bring prosperity and growth to both Canada and Ukraine.

• (1245)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to this very important matter before the House. Bill C-31 is an act to implement the free trade deal with Ukraine. Canada is blessed to have such strong trade deals with many of our international colleagues around the world, and this is certainly no exception.

I am very proud to be part of the Conservative Party, which during the past 10 years it was in office signed many bilateral and multilateral trade deals, such as the one with the European Union, which we were very pleased to see pass at report stage earlier this week. We look forward to this important bill progressing to third reading next week.

I am also very pleased to be a member of a party whose government negotiated the trans-Pacific partnership, which, I must say, is a true testament to the hard work of my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Abbotsford, who spent many years as the international trade minister negotiating these important deals on behalf of Canada. I wish the member well as he recovers. I am very proud to serve in a caucus with the member for Abbotsford.

The issue at hand today is Bill C-31, the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. This is an important deal, because it further strengthens our relations in that important region. The Conservative Party has always been a true friend to Ukraine. Conservatives have always stood for Ukraine in the international world. In fact, it was a Conservative prime minister, Brian Mulroney, who was the first to recognize the Ukrainian government after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Our country is well remembered in Ukraine, and my party has certainly done great work in negotiating the Canada-Ukraine trade deal.

This bill would bring the opportunity to open new markets for Canadian manufacturers and producers, certainly in the agricultural community as a whole. I am very proud to represent the great riding of Perth—Wellington, which has one of the strongest agricultural communities in this country. There is a strong beef and pork sector in my riding, and it is always looking to expand markets. I am proud to stand to speak on behalf of the farmers in my riding, who are really working hard to expand markets.

I am going to leave it there. I wanted to say how important this trade deal is for Canadian farmers, businesses, and exporters. I hope we will continue to expand our markets and that all members will support Bill C-31.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-31, an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

I want to take a moment to talk about the history of humanity, which will hopefully yield some insight into the notion of free trade. What is trade, essentially? According to the *Canadian Oxford*, a well-respected dictionary, trade is the exchange of goods between peoples.

That is an interesting first take on what free trade is. When two individuals meet to trade something, no matter the period in history, whether they barter or anything else, they exchange one commodity for another. That is trade.

I consulted the dictionary again to look up the meaning of free trade. It says that free trade is a theory, an economic doctrine whereby exchanges are free from obstacles and international transactions are free from protectionist intervention.

The free trade doctrine was formulated in the eighth century. It was also discussed by physiocrats such as David Hume and Adam Smith and in the writings of Mr. Ricardo and John Stuart Mill, where it is explored in greater detail. To those authors, the freedom of nations to trade is founded on the international division of labour, where each nation specializes in the production for which its aptitudes are greatest and where production is most cost effective. This theory underscores the positive effects of competition, which allows consumers to get products of the best quality at the lowest price.

Government Orders

Here is what we know about free trade. Theorists apply this concept more to international relations, but I would like to apply it to any form of trade without restrictions, whether at a national, international, or community level, or between two individuals. My colleagues will understand my logic.

I asked myself what we, human beings, have been doing for thousands of years, if not trading freely. If we look back at the Neolithic age, it seems to me that any men who ever met would know right away that they were going to trade products.

Even this spontaneous trade between tribes or individuals involved a certain degree of expertise, similar to the definition used by philosophers which states that free trade seeks to divide work sectors between different countries based on their skills and expertise, as well as their resources, of course. I am sure we can all agree that Canada will never have much expertise in growing bananas, for example, because we do not have the right climate to do so.

It seems to me that free trade has always happened. That is my argument. Being an evolutionist, I believe that we have been trading freely for millions of years. Long before we had countries and borders, humans traded with one another. In short, free trade is definitely not a modern or post-modern construct.

Nevertheless, I went and had a look at protectionism. The definition in the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* is this: the theory or practice of protecting domestic industries. Trade tariffs are imposed in order to protect the local economy from foreign competition.

• (1255)

That is exactly what we are worried about right now, for example, with the hon. President of the United States, Mr. Trump, who is talking about potentially imposing tariffs and thus moving forward with a form of protectionism.

Protectionism has always been around. The Conservative Party of Canada was once in favour of protectionism. It depends on which way the wind is blowing. It is a matter of historical and political circumstance.

That being said, for the past 30 years, the Conservative Party has been the ultimate champion of free trade. I think that is a good thing because, as I demonstrated earlier, free trade has always existed from a philosophical perspective.

However, protectionism can be dangerous when it is fully applied because then the market is controlled by the government. In its milder form, this state is referred to as socialism, and in its more extreme form, it is referred to as communism.

The implementation of any type of trade system that is not free trade takes us in a rather dangerous direction. What is the best way to control populations? As I already mentioned, people have been trading with each other for millions of years. When governments were formed and kingdoms established, they quickly discovered that the best way of controlling people was to control the trade they were doing with each other.

What I am trying to say is that free trade has always existed, it is part of the very ontology of humanity, and we therefore should not

be afraid of it; quite the contrary, we should celebrate free trade as a form of absolute liberty and an inalienable human right.

To come back to the bill, it is absolutely impossible to oppose, because it implements the free trade agreement between Ukraine and Canada. In fact, just a few years ago and under our government, Canada signed 45 free trade deals, for instance with Peru, South Korea, and the European Union. I could go on and on, but I cannot remember all the countries off the top of my head.

Furthermore, under the incredible leadership of the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, we also created the largest free trade platform in the history of humanity, namely, NAFTA, an agreement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

We believe that the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is certainly a very positive way for us to show support for that great country, which is home to Kiev, the cradle of Russian civilization. That probably explains the tension between Russia and Ukraine, and that is why our support for Ukraine is so important. After all, history is such that Ukraine is now an independent country.

Let us explore why it is good for us to trade with Ukraine. I will speak from a monetary perspective, never mind international relations. Ukraine's GDP, its purchasing power, is \$339.2 billion U.S. annually. The per capita GDP is a little more bleak at \$7,900 U.S. That is why Ukrainians are certainly going to benefit from our free trade agreement with them. We are certainly going to contribute to increasing GDP to the benefit of every inhabitant of Ukraine, which will be excellent for them, their families, and their quality of life.

The population of Ukraine is 45.2 million, which is 10 million more than Canada's. By all accounts, we have similar population profiles. Their exports and imports account for 82% of the GDP, at the exchange rate.

Finally, Ukraine is a large exporting country like Canada and that may be because it is a bread basket nation, just like Canada is. Ukraine has always supplied wheat, oats, and other grains to the Soviet Union, or modern-day Russia, and to many other countries in the European Union, I imagine.

• (1300)

Ukraine is Canada's 75th largest merchandise trading partner out of 200 countries in the world. That is not bad, but I imagine that it could reach 50th or 40th place with this agreement, which will also help increase its per capita GDP. That was Ukraine's profile.

I have a very interesting document here that gets into the nuts and bolts of what trade with Ukraine would look like on a day-to-day basis. Bilateral trade between Canada and Ukraine averaged \$289 million from 2011 to 2015. That should go up by 19% once this agreement comes into force. Once the agreement is in force, Canada and Ukraine will immediately eliminate tariffs on 99.9% of their imports. That is sure to be good for Canadian and Ukrainian exporters and consumers.

Government Orders

Oh my goodness, here is something interesting. Canada's GDP will rise by \$29.2 million. That is not peanuts. Similarly, Ukraine's GDP will go up by \$18.6 million. The really wonderful thing is that, in terms of international relations, this free trade agreement with Ukraine will bring that country into the fold of our great federation. Canada has more international agreements, whether commercial or military, than any other country. It is as simple as that. Any country that wants to feel even a little bit at ease at the UN wants Canada as a friend.

Not only will Ukraine be more comfortable in terms of its international relations and its relationship with neighbouring Russia, but it will also not be losing out either. We are going to increase our GDP by only \$10 million more than Ukraine, which will see its GDP increase by \$18.6 million. That is a fairly balanced relationship.

Once again, this shows how Canada is, without question, one of the greatest trading nations in the world, since this agreement is more beneficial to us than the other party. We always come out on top. Even NAFTA was a winning situation for us.

The value of Canadian exports to Ukraine will increase by \$41.2 million a year. The expected gains for Canada will vary and will come from the export of pork, machinery, and equipment. That is great news for Quebec, which is the largest exporter of pork in the world. It exports a lot of pork to China, but now it will also be able to export it to Ukraine.

Manufactured goods, vehicles, parts, and chemicals will also be exported. This agreement will therefore also be good for the auto sector in southern Ontario, a region that has been struggling since the 2007-08 crisis. What is more, in the past five years, there has been a significant drop in the number of manufacturing jobs in Canada. This free trade agreement will definitely help increase the number of jobs in that sector.

It is important to remember that the Conservative government is behind this free trade agreement. All the Liberal government is doing is making the implementation agreement official from a legislative standpoint. The Conservative government is the one that initiated and negotiated the agreement with the Ukrainian government at the time.

Since I am running out of time, I will say that we fully support this free trade agreement. To end this Friday on a positive note, for once, I can say that I am proud of this government, which made a good decision regarding this free trade agreement.

Let us now see what it will do to stand up to the superpower to the south, where rising protectionist sentiments threaten our economy. As I said in my earlier philosophical musings, protectionism is incompatible with the absolute freedom of each and every being on this wonderful planet.

• (1305)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to doing it again.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his speech.

It is obvious that issues surrounding trade agreements can be very complex. Connecting philosophy and practical application is no small feat. Congratulations to the hon. member.

Earlier, my colleague read the definition of “free trade” from the dictionary. Could he tell us which word comes after “free trade” in the dictionary?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I wish my memory was that good. I do not know which word comes after “free trade” in the dictionary. I assume the hon. member knows which one it is, even if he is asking me. I sure would like to know.

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about the work the Conservative government undertook in regard to free trade. We had 46 trade agreements, and initiated the one before us today. To have all parties support this is really quite an accomplishment.

My question is about the tariffs that will be removed on some of the items. We look at what is going on south of the border with the reopening of NAFTA. Could the member speak to the impacts for Canada of reopening and renegotiating NAFTA?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, we have to be aware that the impacts might be numerous, wide-ranging, and certainly scary, if not problematic, for our economy, for the well-being of all Canadian citizens, and certainly for the residents of my riding. That is why I call upon the government to not just try to publicly seem to be doing a good job. Some of its ministers went there a few days ago to chat with different secretaries of the administration.

Our Prime Minister should try to be more responsible and confident. He should stop just giving us talking points, which is completely pathetic, and tell us that he will see the President of America and ensure that all of our interests will be safeguarded.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, February 13, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Private Members' Business

● (1310)

[English]

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the whips and pursuant to Standing Order 45 (7) I ask that the recorded division on the third reading of Bill C-31, an act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine currently scheduled for Monday, February 13 be deferred to Tuesday, February 14, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly the recorded division is further deferred to Tuesday at the conclusion of oral questions.

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find the consent of the House to see the clock as 1:30 p.m., so we may commence with private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS*[English]***INCOME TAX ACT**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC) moved that Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (rehabilitation of historic property), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as one walks the streets of London, the quarters of Paris, the piazzas of Rome, one stands in awe. The buildings speak to us, of great artists and philosophers who lived within, of revolutions staged there that changed the world, of the growth and advance of societies and cultures that those buildings mark.

We look at that built heritage in those great cities, not just for its own intrinsic beauty but because those buildings tell stories, of people, of history, of that place, and of who we are. We may be living in the here and now, but the built heritage informs us of the many twists and turns of humanity that brought us here.

Built heritage matters. It is important. It tells us who we are and why. It is no surprise then that the great places of the world are defined by their built heritage, and that is what people come to see. It informs and it inspires.

It is the same in Canada. We are debating this bill seeking to protect Canada's built heritage while we are inside Canada's most iconic building. We more than most can appreciate the meaning that the very special sense of this place gives to the tremendous honour we have in serving in the House of Commons.

Our built heritage here, all around us, reminds us of our past, our founding Fathers of Confederation, the Inuit and aboriginal peoples

who first made this home, the trappers, the railway, the industries, the farmers and labourers who built the economy. All of those are literally carved into this building. The stone and the wood too speak to our lands and our forests. We have all around us a tangible example of why preserving our built heritage matters.

Bill C-323 seeks to preserve and protect our country's important historic built form by encouraging its restoration. The bill would do this through two simple devices. The first element is a 20% tax credit for spending on the restoration of historic buildings. The second element is an accelerated three year capital cost writeoff for the rest of the restoration cost.

The policy rationale behind the bill is simple. There is strong public interest in encouraging the preservation and restoration of significant historic buildings. However, the cost to individual owners is much higher than the alternative of demolition and new construction. When we ask private owners to preserve historic buildings through a heritage designation, we are asking them to deliver an important public benefit, but we are asking those private citizens to bear the full high cost of delivering this, something from which we all benefit. Through the tax credit and the accelerated writeoff, we are proposing to provide a modest measure to offset some of the privately borne costs of restoring important buildings in our communities.

Too often the economic burden creates an incentive to demolish. We just witnessed that with last month's demolition of the 110-year-old Beaux Arts Bank of Montreal building at Yonge and Roselawn in Toronto. Although plans had been designed to incorporate restoration of the heritage building into a new development, at the end of the day, the owners chose to demolish instead, resulting in much unhappiness in the surrounding community.

This bill would help to change those calculations and give property owners a reason to do what is right not just for their interests, but in the community's interest.

This is not a partisan initiative. It crosses party lines. I want to thank the Liberal members for Cloverdale—Langley City and from Kingston and the Islands for their help with this proposal.

The bill is based upon a policy initiative that was under development under both Conservative and Liberal governments. It relies upon work done within Parks Canada in anticipation of such a tax credit proposal, including the development of the national register of historic places.

I appeal to all members of the House to consider the bill in that non-partisan spirit as a genuine effort we can all support to make our communities better places to live.

It is important to observe that the reach of this tax credit is managed. Not every old building in Canada will be eligible. Only buildings on the national register of historic sites will qualify. These are generally the most important of the buildings that receive heritage designation under provincial or territorial law.

The bill would also give the minister the power to extend the credit to all heritage designated properties in a province or territory, but that is a decision that will belong to the minister. This protection would ensure that the cost to the public purse of the credit would remain manageable and it would prevent any abuse aimed at taking inappropriate advantage of the new tax credit.

● (1315)

The bill would also ensure that the taxpayers' exposure is controlled in another way. Only costs directly related to restoration of the heritage features would be eligible. A professional licensed architect would have to certify both those costs and that the work is done in accordance with the "Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada", a document prepared by Parks Canada in anticipation of exactly an initiative like this bill. The structure of how the credit works would also eliminate the need to create any new bureaucracy to manage the program, further minimizing any costs to the public purse.

In fact, the annual impact on federal finances of this program applied to historic properties all across Canada will still be but a tiny fraction of the \$3-billion cost of the restoration of the Parliament buildings currently under way.

The support for the bill is strong. The National Trust for Canada, a national non-profit organization committed to working to save historic places in Canada, has urged support for the bill.

In the 30 years between 1970 and 2000, Canada lost more than 20 per cent of its historic building stock, and losses continue apace... [Bill C-323] would transform the economic fundamentals for renewing historic places, with spin-off effects including the creation of more skilled jobs and less environmental impact and waste than new construction.

The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada supports the bill, and notes that:

Policies that promote preservation and re-use of historic properties have demonstrated huge economic returns on investment through job retention and creation, tourism, and enhanced property values.

Heritage Winnipeg notes the similarity of the bill to the heritage restoration tax credit south of the border, which they call a great U.S. success story with a 40-year track record. Bill C-323 "presents an historic opportunity", they note.

Montreal Mosaic, a partnership of non-profit community organizations, calls for support of the bill based on its economic, environmental and historic benefits.

Heritage B.C. says this is something the heritage community has wanted for a long time:

It's consistent with our goals to preserve cultural heritage. It seeks to do that by creating an incentive to rehabilitate heritage buildings rather than to replace them.

Right here in this city, Heritage Ottawa says it strongly supports Bill C-323.

All across the country, municipal councils, the folks who are on the front lines, are balancing private property rights against the public interest in preserving built heritage, and they have to struggle with those very difficult decisions. One after another, those municipal councils are passing resolutions endorsing the bill.

When we think of the places we love to visit around the world, built heritage figures prominently. From the French Quarter in New

Private Members' Business

Orleans to the Great Wall of China, from the Taj Mahal in India to the castles of Prague. The same is true in Canada. From the Grande Allée in Quebec City to Stephen Avenue in Calgary, from Peake's Wharf in Charlottetown to the distillery district in Toronto, we are drawn to these beautiful, story-filled places, and it is their historic buildings that define them. They become the places people go to visit, to learn, to shop, and to dine.

This demonstrates that we value and enjoy the historic buildings and the environment they create. It is where we want to be, and of course, the bill has the potential to aid the restoration of our historic buildings, not just in our big cities. It can lead to the rescue and restoration of important elements of Canada's built heritage in all parts of our country, in rural hamlets and small towns, and occasionally even places in our wilderness. Our history can come to life everywhere.

In Canada, however, we have been the victim of twin arguments that lead people to undervalue our history and our built heritage. First is the traditional student's lament, that Canadian history is boring. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. Certainly, our body count falls far short of that of the old world, and we lack the marketing hype of the history of our American neighbours, but Canada's stories are more intriguing than most, drawing in strands from the European and the U.S. experience as input into the history we have made in building this unique and wonderful country, more near to perfect than any other, I would argue.

Indeed, most of those who have grown to know and love our country's history have travelled that path guided by heritage buildings that were the gateways to the stories of the past.

● (1320)

Think of them: the tower on Signal Hill looking out over the Atlantic Ocean, the place where so many explorers came as they opened up this continent; Province House in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, the cradle of our Confederation. We think of the Citadelle in Quebec and the old walls of Quebec City that stood witness to the battle on the Plains of Abraham, which changed our destiny here in the North American continent; and, of course, in Halifax Pier 21, which welcomed so many who came to build this country. There is the Old Port of Montreal, which spoke to the burgeoning growth of a Canadian economy. There is Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake that bore witness to the battles of the War of 1812, which determined our destiny as a separate people here on the North American continent, different from our neighbours to the south.

One can go to the railway station in Winnipeg, and others across the country, to learn and understand the tremendous role that railways played in the binding together and the building of this country, and the growth of our economies, both rural and urban. When one goes to the Palliser Hotel in Calgary, one sees the dynamism of that city and the promise it held for the future; and, of course, the old Hotel Vancouver, and so many other buildings there, speaks to the tremendous other side of Canada's history.

Private Members' Business

Again, built form is the core of it all. Indeed, built form tells us who we are and where we came from, and that is what inspires those who love history.

The other argument is that we are a young country and thus lack history and any built heritage worthy of preservation. Never mind the list I gave, that certainly is not true. With four centuries of history comes 400 years of built heritage, and we have had none of it wiped out in the carpet bombing of a world war, as has happened in other places.

Canada is filled with built heritage treasures, but we keep losing them. For example, Toronto has seen other losses recently, including the demolition of the iconic Stollerys building frontage at Yonge and Bloor; incidentally, once the men's wear business owned by a former member of this House for a Spadina riding. The beautiful Empress Hotel at the corner of Yonge and Gould was also recently lost.

The great architect and author, Eric Arthur, in his 1964 book, *Toronto, No Mean City*, lamented, "In the march of progress, we have ruthlessly destroyed almost all our older architecture...". His books documented beautiful treasures of buildings that were lost to the wrecker's ball. One can only wistfully dream of what character that city would exude had some of those jewels survived. As he said, "surely no city in the world with a background of three hundred years does so little to make that background known".

While the generations that preceded us have allowed much of our story to be lost, with this bill we have the opportunity to bestow a gift to future generations. That is the gift of seeing, knowing, and understanding where they came from, the roots of their communities as reflected in a preserved and restored built heritage.

As we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, Bill C-323 presents us with an opportunity to make Canada's history, in the form of its built heritage, an enduring legacy to benefit Canadians for years to come. It is a fitting year to adopt this policy, which is perhaps long overdue, but which would deliver lasting benefits for generations to come. The 150th anniversary of Confederation is indeed an opportunity for us to focus, both on that past, but on how we can tie that past to the future for the generations to come, how we can make that meaning of all that Canada is meaningful forever. Preserving our built heritage is a big part of that.

I have several other private members' bills. I selected to proceed with this one. I have two others that dealt specifically with Canada's built heritage, other important historical buildings that are at some risk. One is the birthplace of John Diefenbaker, a place in Neustadt, Ontario, which I thought would be most appropriate to have purchased and acquired and run as a museum for the benefit of all Canadians. Indeed, former Prime Minister Harper made that commitment under the previous government. Sadly, that appears not to be happening. That building is at risk and may forever be lost.

Another that I believe should be a museum is the summer home of John A. Macdonald in Rivière-du-Loup, a place that hosted cabinet meetings. People talk about the "winter White House" in Mar-a-Lago right now. The home in Rivière-du-Loup was the "summer 24 Sussex" before there even was a 24 Sussex. That is where the government operated for some time during the summers.

●(1325)

Fortunately, that has been saved by a group of benevolent citizens through something called Canadian Heritage of Quebec. By contract, it runs it as a bed and breakfast, but its existence is precarious. It is not only something that could benefit from a tax credit such as this but something that is worthy of even greater support.

I chose to proceed with this bill, because it has the potential to benefit properties all across Canada. To help protect that built heritage for our future generations, to help us know ourselves and our history much better, I urge all members of the House to support it.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am definitely sympathetic to this bill. I have received a lot of calls from areas in my riding about it. My riding is built on a huge amount of heritage. We have several historic railway stations. The line was built in the 1890s, and we spent all of 2016 celebrating the founder of our region, Antoine Labelle.

When I was growing up, my father spent a lot of time with a bunch of people creating heritage committees and saving the stations. In 2008, on election night, the train station in my hometown burned to the ground. I think it is really important that we do preserve our heritage.

I have a couple of quick questions for my colleague. There is no upper cost limit in this bill. I am curious to know if my colleague thinks there should or should not be one.

I know that the United States has a tax credit for heritage buildings. What does my colleague know about the return on investment for that cost for the government?

Also, and I do not mean this in a partisan way, why did this not happen in the last 10 years?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, in terms of controlling costs, and I spoke to that somewhat in my speech, the most important control is that this applies only to properties that are on the Canadian Register of Historic Places, and that creates a limited frame of properties. Properties could be added to that, but the government is in a position to control that, because it is done through Parks Canada. While we welcome properties going onto it, if there is a concern that there is too much financial exposure, that gives the Government of Canada an ability to manage that cost.

In an ideal world, I would have extended this tax credit to all properties designated at the provincial and territorial level, but instead, I gave that power to the minister, something that is in the structure of the bill, which would ensure that those costs can be kept under control.

Certainly Parks Canada had in the past, when the policy was being prepared, come up with projections and said that the cost was quite small, a tiny fraction of what we are spending on the restoration of these five or six buildings around us in the parliamentary precinct. From that perspective, it does that.

Private Members' Business

Why it did not happen in the past over Liberal and Conservative governments is a good question. This is an opportunity for all of us to solve whatever failures occurred due to other priorities people focused on that allowed these things to be delayed. Now is the time, on the 150th anniversary of Confederation, to put an end to those delays and proceed forward with this policy.

• (1330)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from York—Simcoe for this important bill. It is certainly important to many of the middle-class owners in my riding who are involved in heritage buildings.

I would ask the member this. Does he think that the 20% tax credit is also appropriate for wealthy people, the millionaires who happen to live in historic homes?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the tax credit will only apply to those on the Canadian Register of Historic Places. Therefore, it will not be just anyone who happens to own a nice old house. It would have to be, obviously, one of the most significant properties in the country.

The 20% number is less than in the U.S. In the U.S. it is a 25% credit. This is a bit more modest. However, I also believe that there is a public interest and a public benefit that comes from preserving our built heritage. We all benefit from it.

It is not surprising that when a municipality moves to designate a heritage property, there is often enormous conflict, and property owners resist, because they are being told that we are effectively, as a state, expropriating part of their property. We are telling them what they can do with it. We are forcing them to keep it the way it is. We are forcing them to protect it, but they are going to have to bear the full cost of that. This is a way of modestly offsetting that and allowing some balance, some incentive, something that makes it a little easier for that property owner to bear, something that I believe will make it a lot easier for those who are seeking to preserve heritage across the country to get people to accept the notion that it is indeed something they should co-operate with in the public interest. I think that is why we see that so many municipal councils have agreed and support this policy. It will help them deal with problems.

If we look at the situation at Yonge and Roselawn in Toronto, the property owners had worked effectively with developers. They were trying to come up with a way to make it work. However, at the end of the day, the numbers did not work, the pro forma did not work for the property owners, so they demolished it.

I believe we have tried to strike the right balance. It is a little more conservative than the American tax credit, but nobody is getting rich off of this. Rather, it is something that will just provide a measure of offset for costs that we are asking private owners to bear to deliver in the public interest.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his presentation.

I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-323. The bill before the House today, sponsored by the member for York—Simcoe, seeks to

amend the Income Tax Act “to establish a tax credit for expenses related to the rehabilitation of a historic property”.

Tax changes should ideally be made as part of the budgetary process. This gives the government a chance to fully examine all options, strike a balance between priorities, and make new fiscal commitments only when they are affordable and the government can do so responsibly.

Bill C-323 raises a number of issues that must be fully and thoughtfully considered. Of course, cost is one important element, but it is not the only one.

According to Parks Canada, there are approximately 13,000 historic sites in the Canadian Register of Historic Places. However, the number of distinct heritage properties is probably much higher. Indeed, the register includes heritage districts that could include more than one property. For instance, in Ontario alone, there are 121 heritage districts that comprise over 23,000 properties.

I would also like to point out another challenge when it comes to determining cost. The bill does not cap the amount people can apply for for tax purposes. It is completely irresponsible.

We also have to consider whether this kind of tax credit would actually promote the preservation of historic property rather than just provide an unexpected perk to the owners for doing work that they are already obliged to do.

Equality among homeowners is another very important issue we need to discuss. Some people will be eligible for the home renovation credit while their neighbours, who do not own a designated historic property, would not be eligible even though costs are incurred in both cases. That would be totally unfair.

This bill is also likely to result in a sharp increase in applications for historic designation. The government will have to assess Parks Canada's ability to meet that increased demand. That will result in more costs.

Moreover, as with any new tax credit, the government will have to evaluate the administrative burden on the Canada Revenue Agency.

The Government of Canada is committed to promoting equality and efficiency for the middle class and all Canadians, especially when it comes to our tax system. That is why, in budget 2016, the government announced that it would do a comprehensive review of tax expenditures. This effort is part of the government's overall commitment to eliminate poorly targeted and ineffective programs, wasteful spending, and ineffective and obsolete government initiatives. We are striving for equality and efficiency for the middle class.

Private Members' Business

The government recognizes the importance of preserving Canada's heritage in the interest of the middle class and all Canadians. As a matter of fact, the Income Tax Act already contains incentives to encourage individuals and corporations to make donations for the preservation of historic assets. Donations of such assets or donations intended to support the cost of preserving and maintaining such assets to registered charities are eligible for a charitable donation tax credit for individuals or a tax deduction for corporations. Registered charities are fully exempt from paying tax on the income they receive.

When we add provincial tax relief to the equation, the charitable donation tax credit comes to, on average, 46¢ for every dollar over \$200. For most taxpayers who donate more than \$200, this tax credit eliminates any tax to be paid on most of the donations and reduces other taxes owing.

• (1335)

A tax credit is also available for up to 75% of an individual's net income and can be carried forward for five years.

Canadian tax incentives for charitable donations are among the most generous in the world. The federal government provides approximately \$3 billion in tax assistance annually to the charitable sector.

The government acted responsibly by implementing a measure to strengthen the middle class. One of the first measures we implemented after becoming a government was to introduce a tax cut for the middle class, and that has been in effect since early last year. In total, nearly nine million Canadians are now benefiting from this tax cut.

The second measure that our government took to help the middle class and those working hard to join it was to introduce the new Canada child benefit in budget 2016. This measure gives more money to Canadian families in order to help them deal with the high cost of raising children.

Nine out of ten families are now receiving more money thanks to this program. The new Canada child benefit is simpler and more generous than the old child benefit system it replaced, and it is completely tax-free. It also does a better job of targeting the people who need it the most.

Thanks to the new Canada child benefit, about 300,000 fewer children will live in poverty in 2017 compared to 2014, which means that Canada's child poverty rate will drop by about 40%. This new benefit is the most important innovation in social policy in a generation.

A stronger Canada pension plan was a key promise we made to strengthen the middle class. We delivered on that commitment by working in close collaboration and common purpose with our provincial and territorial partners.

A secure and dignified retirement is certainly a top priority for hard-working Canadians. It has been a pillar of Canadian prosperity since the 20th century.

We know that middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever, and many of them are worried about not having saved enough

by the time they retire. We also know that young Canadians in particular, few of whom can expect to have jobs that offer a workplace pension plan, find it challenging to save enough money for retirement.

We enhanced the CPP to improve long-term economic outcomes for Canadian families. Although it will take a little time to adjust, these foundational changes to our pension plan will provide better support to Canadians in the long term.

An enhanced CPP is the right tool at the right time to improve the retirement income security of younger workers. It is an opportunity for today's hard-working Canadians to give their children, their grandchildren, and future generations a more secure retirement.

In its previous budget, the government made major investments in education, infrastructure, training, and other programs that will help to secure a better quality of life for the country's indigenous peoples and build a stronger, more united, and more prosperous Canada.

Our government invested in modernizing and upgrading public transit, improving waste water systems, increasing access to affordable housing and protecting infrastructure from the effects of climate change. We increased funding for innovation, co-operation and partnerships to protect the integrity of our health care system. We put people first and we are giving Canadians the help they need right now, not 10 years down the road.

At the same time, our government is investing for the years and the decades to come, so that our children and grandchildren can inherit a Canada that is more prosperous and full of hope.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak directly to Bill C-323, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (rehabilitation of historic property). Again, I would like to thank my colleague from York—Simcoe for putting forward this important legislation. Indeed, it is the first time legislation like this has come before the House, although there are similar laws in place in the United States.

We are going to support this at second reading. We would like to get this to committee to have some discussion. The reason we are going to support it is that we really do believe in maintaining our historic buildings as part of our cultural heritage. When I was mayor of Cranbrook, we were looking for ways to try to increase the support for keeping historic buildings, and this is certainly one way to do that. There is an additional cost of course, if someone owns a historic building. It is up to about an additional 21% in cost, so offsetting it with a 20% tax rebate for the improvements seems absolutely appropriate.

Private Members' Business

I want to talk about some of the support that has come forward to me on the bill.

The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada has said it believes:

...there is an important federal role for leadership in heritage conservation. Policies that promote preservation and re-use of historic properties have demonstrated huge economic returns on investment through job retention and creation, tourism, and enhanced property values.

Policies such as tax incentives not only help protect cultural resources and the history represented by heritage places, they promote respectful redevelopment in our communities. In addition, conservation, repair, and adaptation fight climate change by producing less carbon than new construction.

I also received a letter from the National Trust of Canada, which says, "The significant impact of the measures proposed in Bill C-323 would be felt" in ridings across Canada. It goes on to say:

They would transform the economic fundamentals for saving historic places... encouraging the rehabilitation of heritage buildings of every size and type. In the process, they would create more skilled jobs than new construction, and promote the retention of existing buildings, which serve as important carbon sinks.

It further says:

There are many examples of the significant financial and environmental impact of heritage conservation.

Job Creation—Studies show building rehabilitation generates upwards of 21% more jobs, including skilled jobs, than same investment in new construction;

Economic Stimulus—The Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund (CHPIF), a Canada-wide pilot program (2003-2008), was designed to test the benefit of a heritage tax credit. The results were impressive: Federal contributions of \$21.5 million supporting 49 projects leveraged over 8 times more in private sector investment (\$177.2 million); and

Sustainability and Climate Change—Building renewal and re-use capitalizes on materials and energy already invested, reduces construction and demolition waste, and avoids environmental impacts associated with new development. A recent study shows that it takes from 10 to 80 years for a new "green" building to make up for the negative climate change impacts of its construction. In other words, the greenest building is one that already exists.

From a community in my own riding, the city of Nelson says:

These tax measures could transform the economic fundamentals for renewing historic places, and encourage building conservation of every size and type, from landmark commercial buildings to modest homes.

Council has learned firsthand the significant financial impacts of heritage conservation in Nelson. Further studies have also shown that building rehabilitation generates over 21% more jobs...than the same investment in new construction... capitalizes on materials and energy already invested; reduces construction and demolition waste, and avoids environmental impact...

It went on to say that, "the significant impact of this Bill will be felt in Nelson". Indeed it will be felt in all of the communities in Kootenay—Columbia and across Canada. It urges the support for Bill C-323.

• (1345)

While we will be supporting the bill for all the right reasons, right through second reading, we do hope to have some further discussion at committee. We are a bit concerned that there is no means test for the tax rebate. The millionaire or billionaire owner of an historic building in, say, Toronto's Forest Hill would be able to claim a 20% tax credit, despite being well able to afford to pay for the work without a federal subsidy.

We will explore that a little further at committee. We definitely support the principle of this bill, and will be supporting it at second reading.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (rehabilitation of historic property).

This private member's bill from my colleague, the member for York—Simcoe, is a very timely piece of legislation that I believe will benefit Canadians from every community across this country, particularly as Canada gears up to celebrate its 150th birthday in July.

Over the past 150 years, Canada has grown immensely, both culturally and in terms of population. Just this week, Statistics Canada released data from the latest census that showed Canada continues to be the fastest-growing country in the G7.

The census data released also demonstrated that Canadians are increasingly choosing to leave rural areas and migrate towards large urban centres. With this urban centre growth in population, one of two things tends to happen: either there is urban sprawl or older homes are torn down in order to build new subdivisions that can house more people.

One hundred and fifty years ago my home province of British Columbia had a population of just 36,000 people. Today, it has a population of over 4.5 million. As we continue to build new buildings and continue to pursue innovative architecture to accommodate this vast increase in population, we must make sure that we are preserving our history. Heritage homes tend to be found in central locations, as people settle and develop around communities that have existed in the past.

These properties also tend to be the first targets for demolition as developers and landlords tend to find it cheaper to demolish and rebuild. It is not expedient for them to restore and maintain heritage properties. However, as we approach Canada's 150th birthday, it is a perfect opportunity to remind Canadians to be proud of our history and our heritage. It is an important opportunity to encourage them to preserve the work of Canadians who came before us, rather than tear down and build anew.

This is exactly what the bill from the member for York—Simcoe aims to do. Bill C-323 would create a new tax credit for the rehabilitation of buildings that are on the Canadian Register of Historic Places.

With this legislation, Canadians restoring heritage properties would be able to claim a 20% tax credit on rehabilitation costs, as well as receive an accelerated capital cost allowance. Furthermore, this legislation would give the Minister of Canadian Heritage the power to apply this credit to provincially and territorially designated historic properties that are not included on the Canadian Register of Historic Places.

Private Members' Business

We know that these kinds of initiatives work. The Canada 150 infrastructure fund was set up under the Conservative government and intended to assist communities in building new infrastructure to help their constituents celebrate this very special milestone of our country.

This legislation would help us preserve the history of our communities. In the mid-2000s Canada ran a pilot project for this kind of policy, the commercial heritage properties investment fund. This pilot program generated eight private sector dollars for every one public sector dollar invested in the restoration of heritage homes. This is much higher than the five private sector dollars earned in an equivalent program conducted by our neighbours down south in the U.S.

Furthermore, this program, on average, doubled the market property values of historic properties, business revenue, and occupancy rates of the historic properties.

Canada clearly has the appetite and potential to restore and uphold our heritage properties. With Canada 150 on the horizon, this is the perfect opportunity to assist Canadians in preserving our history.

• (1350)

We also want to encourage the creation of new jobs: construction jobs, restoration jobs, and new trades jobs. By including the acceleration of the capital cost allowance alongside the tax credit, the legislation would reduce the long-standing conflict between what constitutes a deductible repair versus a capitalized cost, a problem that often slows down or completely hinders rehabilitation projects.

Finally, this policy just makes good sense. Canadians already enjoy a home renovation tax credit, so why not have this same tax credit for heritage home restorations? By minimizing costs to Canadians engaged in restoring heritage homes, we are also incentivizing Canadians to restore and maintain these important pieces of Canadian history.

This legislation also has broad support from stakeholders right across the country. National Trust, one of Canada's leading heritage protection advocacy groups, said, "This is an idea that has widespread support from heritage advocates, federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities".

Architects have called the bill a win-win for heritage advocates and for local economies looking to create jobs.

We know the long-lasting benefits and impacts that heritage properties can have in our communities. In my own riding, we have the Elgin Heritage Park, an entire area that is dedicated to the preservation of Canada's history. Stewart Farm, located in Elgin Heritage Park, is on Canada's register of historic places. Stewart Farm offers Canadians and schoolchildren an opportunity to have a first-hand view of the life of pioneers and the history of Surrey's agricultural sector. This property could benefit from this legislation and help children of future generations to continue to learn and benefit from its operations.

These are the kinds of initiatives that we should be undertaking as we approach Canada 150. I hope that my colleagues on all sides of the House will join me in support of Bill C-323.

• (1355)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this chamber to outline how the Government of Canada is committed to a fair and efficient tax system that benefits middle-class Canadians.

The bill before us today, as sponsored by the member for York—Simcoe, seeks to establish a tax credit for expenses related to the rehabilitation of a historic property. However, tax changes should ideally be undertaken through the budget process. This is to allow the government to fully consider the trade-offs, balance the priorities, and undertake new fiscal commitments only to the extent they are affordable.

This is why the first point I want to underline is that the government is committed to ensure that federal tax expenditures are fair for Canadians, efficient, as well as fiscally responsible. This is the reason that in the government's first budget, growing the middle class, we announced that we would be undertaking a comprehensive review of tax expenditures. This exercise is part of a broader government commitment to eliminate poorly targeted and inefficient programs, wasteful spending, and ineffective or obsolete programs. At the end of this process, Canada will be one step closer to fairness and efficiency for its citizens and taxpayers.

The bill before us today contains several examples of the issues that would need to be considered when assessing the fairness and efficiency of a tax measure, and I will discuss a few of them.

For example, a key consideration is whether the measure would actually encourage the preservation of historic properties or simply represent a windfall to property owners for doing what they were already required to do.

Another question is whether such a tax credit would create any new inequities between historic property owners and other homeowners.

A third obvious question is how much of a revenue cost such a bill would entail for the government. This question is certainly relevant. As currently drafted, Bill C-323 contains no upper limit on the amount that can be claimed for tax purposes. The government would also have to assess whether requirements of the bill would be practical for the Canada Revenue Agency and Parks Canada to administer.

These are only a few examples of the considerations that would have to be weighed carefully in assessing Bill C-323.

From day one, our government has been focused on advancing the economy for middle-class Canadians. Last year, we replaced the previous system of child benefits with the Canada child benefit, a simpler, tax-free, more generous, targeted benefit that would help those who needed it most.

The CCB, built on our middle-class tax cut, has reduced taxes for nearly nine million Canadians. These two measures together mean that more middle-class Canadians have more money in their pockets, and they can use it as they see fit.

A strengthened middle class means that hard-working Canadians can look forward to a good standard of living and better prospects for their children. When the middle class thrives, we all thrive. We have committed historic levels of investments in infrastructure, which will expand opportunities and deliver stronger, more inclusive growth.

Canadians value fairness. That is why, in budget 2016, we also took action to improve the integrity of Canada's tax system to protect the country's revenue base and to give Canadians greater confidence that the system would be fair to everyone.

● (1400)

Here is what we are doing. In April 2016, the revenue minister announced a series of actions that the Canada Revenue Agency will take to crack down on tax evasion and combat tax avoidance, thanks to the \$444.4 million commitment in budget 2016. These funds are enabling the CRA to hire additional auditors, develop robust business intelligence infrastructure, increase verification activities, and improve the quality of its investigative work. These additional employees will increase the number of CRA audits focused on high-risk taxpayers by 400%.

Furthermore, the government is streamlining its efforts by embedding legal counsel within investigation teams, so that cases can be quickly brought to court. Two new mechanisms are being formed: a special program dedicated to stopping the organizations that create and promote tax schemes for the wealthy, and an independent advisory committee on offshore tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance that will provide strategic advice to the CRA on approaches for combatting offshore tax evasion and tax avoidance.

Canada has also been a very active participant in international efforts to address tax evasion. We are an active member of the global forum on transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes, which was established to ensure that high standards of transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes are in place around the world. Canada has also developed an extensive network of bilateral tax treaties and tax information exchange agreements, which provide for exchange of information.

As confirmed in budget 2016, legislation was recently adopted to implement the common reporting standard for the exchange between tax administrations of information on financial accounts held by non-residents. Canada joins more than 100 other jurisdictions that have similarly committed to implement the new standard.

Canada has also been actively engaged in a second multilateral initiative aimed at addressing base erosion and profit shifting, or BEPS. This refers to certain tax planning arrangements undertaken by multinationals, which, though often legal, exploit the interaction between domestic and international tax rules to minimize taxes. Canada has already implemented a number of the BEPS project recommendations. Going forward, the government will continue to work with the international community to ensure a coherent and consistent response to BEPS.

Private Members' Business

Canada supports the important goal of improving corporate transparency globally. The government has agreed to strong rules in both the Financial Action Task Force and the global forum on transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes in support of corporate transparency. Amendments to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Regulations enhance Canada's requirements for financial institutions regarding the collection of information on beneficial owners of corporations.

In closing, I would like to assure hon. members of our government's commitment to helping the middle class and those who are working hard to join it.

● (1405)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House on behalf of my constituents of Nanaimo—Ladysmith to speak to the benefits of heritage conservation, energy conservation, and job creation.

New Democrats have long supported Canadian heritage and we support the goal of this private member's bill of preserving historic stock. New Democrats support maintaining historic buildings as part of our cultural heritage and due to the cost of repairing these historic buildings, we support government involvement to help defray the costs.

This legislation would help to clear the path for the creation of good green jobs; jobs that are stable, safe, and family-supporting; jobs that do not endanger the climate or the environment; and jobs that help us in the gradual transition away from reliance on fossil fuels.

I thank the City of Nanaimo, which I am honoured to represent, for its very detailed letter supporting the benefits of Bill C-323, an act to amend the Income Tax Act for the rehabilitation of historic property.

Chris Sholberg, who is a planner with community and cultural planning in the City of Nanaimo, wrote to me to say that the bill is "inspired by the successful US Federal Historic Tax Credit Program, the outcome of which has leveraged over \$78 billion in private investment since 1976, resulting in the preservation of over 41,000 historic properties, and in the creation of hundreds of thousands of housing units, many for low/moderate income families."

He wrote, "In Canada, Bill C-323 has the potential of achieving the same success, widely affecting property owners and developers, the construction industry, and positively impacting the economy, job creation and environmental issues."

The letter went on to say that the tax measures contained in this bill "would transform the economic fundamentals for renewing historic places, and will encourage building conservation of every size and type, from landmark commercial buildings to modest homes."

Private Members' Business

The City of Nanaimo provided examples of buildings within the city that would benefit from such an incentive, including the Great National Land Building, 17 Church Street; the Occidental Hotel, 432 Fitzwilliam Street, also known as the Oxy; Nanaimo Firehall Number 2 on Nicol Street; the Nanaimo Hospital, now Malaspina Lodge, on Machleary Street; and Fernville, also known as The Land Residence, on Irwin Street.

I thank the city for its strong advocacy and its encouragement for this federal partnership that could help jobs and the preservation of historic buildings at the local level.

I also received a letter encouraging support for the bill from Chelsea Challis in Nanaimo. She wrote, "As a member of the development and construction industry in Nanaimo, I regularly witness historic properties being demolished because the cost to restore and maintain them is more expensive than tearing them down and replacing them with new buildings".

The letter went on:

The unfortunate consequence of this method is that the city immediately loses a piece of its history that can never be replaced. Furthermore, with current building codes, regulations, and the high cost of construction materials, new structures cannot be built with the same charm and craftsmanship as many historic buildings were originally constructed with. The current system does not encourage architectural preservation but, rather, encourages demolition and replacement. Bill C-323 will give owners and developers an incentive to save and restore their historic properties, which will not only benefit them, but will also benefit the entire community.

Ms. Challis wrote, "Studies show building rehabilitation generates upward of 21% more jobs, including skilled jobs, than the same investment in new construction.

She adds to the list that the City of Nanaimo provided The Jean Burns Building recently destroyed mostly by fire in downtown Nanaimo and also The First Nanaimo Scout Hut.

I am grateful to members of my community who have provided letters of support.

I will note that I also have a letter that I just received this morning from Laurie Gourlay, writing on behalf of Salish Sea Trust who encourages us to "specifically address rehabilitation of historic buildings, with all of the cultural, economic and social benefits that that provides," and inviting our attention to "the parallel benefits afforded when similar considerations and support are provided to cultural and natural rehabilitation measures."

● (1410)

We thank the member for bringing the bill forward. We look forward to speaking further, when we have the second hour of debate on the bill, about some of the specific benefits with respect to jobs, the environment, and conservation in our own communities. Also, New Democrats will raise some concerns at committee about ensuring that this benefit is particularly targeted toward lower- and middle-income earners, who are particularly economically crunched when it comes to finding the budget for doing the kinds of conservation and heritage renovations the bill supports.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

Before we adjourn, members will recall that earlier this week, we recognized our page supervisor, Lynn Legault. As we adjourn today, this will mark the last moment she has been able to serve here in the House, after 32 years of serving this place.

Lynn, we just want to express our gratitude again for all of your service to this place and to Parliament. Thank you very much.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: It being 2:13 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:13 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, February 10, 2017

Business of the House

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Ms. Tassi | 8779 |
| Motion | 8779 |
| (Motion agreed to) | 8779 |

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Bill C-31. Third reading | 8779 |
| Mr. Champagne | 8779 |
| Ms. Gladu | 8780 |
| Mr. Stetski | 8781 |
| Mr. Stetski | 8781 |
| Mr. Wrzesnewskyj | 8782 |
| Ms. Watts | 8782 |
| Ms. Gladu | 8783 |
| Mr. Paul-Hus | 8783 |
| Mr. Wrzesnewskyj | 8784 |
| Mr. Stetski | 8784 |
| Ms. Rempel | 8784 |
| Mr. Wrzesnewskyj | 8786 |
| Mr. Weir | 8786 |

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Scarborough

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Mrs. Zahid | 8786 |
|------------------|------|

Elim Church

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Mr. Trost | 8787 |
|-----------------|------|

Black History Month

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Mr. Dubourg | 8787 |
|-------------------|------|

Texada Quarrying

| | |
|--|------|
| Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) | 8787 |
|--|------|

Henry Charles

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Ms. Murray | 8787 |
|------------------|------|

Edmonton

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| Mr. McCauley | 8787 |
|--------------------|------|

Sierra Leone

| | |
|---|------|
| Mr. Casey (Cumberland—Colchester) | 8788 |
|---|------|

Court Challenges Program

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Mr. Drouin | 8788 |
|------------------|------|

Greg Hinton

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Mr. Brown | 8788 |
|-----------------|------|

51st Canadian Ski Marathon

| | |
|--|------|
| Mr. Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation) | 8788 |
|--|------|

Jacques Nadeau

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| Mrs. Romanado | 8788 |
|---------------------|------|

Ski Day

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Mr. Kitchen | 8789 |
|-------------------|------|

Inuit-Crown Partnership

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Ms. Jones | 8789 |
|-----------------|------|

Child Poverty

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| Mr. MacGregor | 8789 |
|---------------------|------|

All Senior Care Seniors Games

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Mr. Nater | 8789 |
|-----------------|------|

Court Challenges Program

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Mr. Ehsassi | 8789 |
|-------------------|------|

ORAL QUESTIONS

Taxation

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Mr. Poilievre | 8790 |
| Mr. Duclos | 8790 |
| Mr. Poilievre | 8790 |
| Ms. Petitpas Taylor | 8790 |
| Mr. Poilievre | 8790 |
| Mr. Duclos | 8790 |

Finance

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Mr. Deltell | 8790 |
| Ms. Petitpas Taylor | 8790 |
| Mr. Deltell | 8791 |
| Ms. Petitpas Taylor | 8791 |

Democratic Reform

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Mr. Rankin | 8791 |
| Ms. Gould | 8791 |
| Mr. Rankin | 8791 |
| Ms. Gould | 8791 |

Indigenous Affairs

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| Mr. Saganash | 8791 |
| Ms. Jones | 8791 |
| Mr. Saganash | 8791 |
| Ms. Jones | 8792 |

Housing

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Mr. Albas | 8792 |
| Ms. Petitpas Taylor | 8792 |

Finance

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Mr. Godin | 8792 |
| Ms. Petitpas Taylor | 8792 |

Natural Resources

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Mrs. Stubbs | 8792 |
| Ms. Rudd | 8792 |

Small Business

| | |
|---------------------|------|
| Mrs. Boucher | 8793 |
| Ms. Hutchings | 8793 |
| Ms. Gladu | 8793 |
| Mr. Lametti | 8793 |

Infrastructure

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Ms. Watts | 8793 |
|-----------------|------|

| | | | |
|--|------|--|------|
| Mr. Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs) | 8793 | Justice | |
| Democratic Reform | | Mr. Motz | 8798 |
| Ms. Quach | 8793 | Mr. Blair | 8798 |
| Ms. Gould | 8793 | Canadian Heritage | |
| Ms. Quach | 8793 | Mr. Amos | 8798 |
| Ms. Gould | 8794 | Mr. Casey (Charlottetown) | 8798 |
| National Defence | | Sealing Industry | |
| Mr. Paul-Hus | 8794 | Mr. Yurdiga | 8798 |
| Mr. Rioux | 8794 | Mr. LeBlanc | 8798 |
| Mr. Paul-Hus | 8794 | Public Safety | |
| Mr. Rioux | 8794 | Mr. Beaulieu | 8798 |
| Veterans Affairs | | Mr. Holland | 8799 |
| Mrs. Wagantall | 8794 | International Trade | |
| Mrs. Romanado | 8794 | Mr. Ste-Marie | 8799 |
| National Defence | | Mr. Leslie | 8799 |
| Mr. Brassard | 8794 | Foreign Affairs | |
| Mr. Rioux | 8794 | Ms. Pauzé | 8799 |
| Health | | Mr. DeCoursey | 8799 |
| Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River) | 8795 | The Environment | |
| Mr. Lightbound | 8795 | Mr. Tootoo | 8799 |
| Indigenous Affairs | | Ms. McKenna | 8799 |
| Ms. Jolibois | 8795 | Points of Order | |
| Ms. Jones | 8795 | Question Period | |
| National Defence | | Mr. Motz | 8800 |
| Mr. McKinnon | 8795 | | |
| Mr. MacKinnon | 8795 | | |
| Mr. Clarke | 8795 | | |
| Mr. MacKinnon | 8795 | | |
| Mr. McCauley | 8796 | | |
| Mr. MacKinnon | 8796 | | |
| Public Services and Procurement | | | |
| Mr. Clarke | 8796 | | |
| Mr. MacKinnon | 8796 | | |
| Mr. McCauley | 8796 | | |
| Mr. MacKinnon | 8796 | | |
| Justice | | | |
| Mr. MacGregor | 8796 | | |
| Mr. Casey (Charlottetown) | 8796 | | |
| Canadian Coast Guard | | | |
| Ms. Malcolmson | 8797 | | |
| Mr. LeBlanc | 8797 | | |
| Health | | | |
| Mr. Doherty | 8797 | | |
| Mr. Rioux | 8797 | | |
| Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship | | | |
| Ms. Rempel | 8797 | | |
| Mr. Hussen | 8797 | | |
| Ms. Rempel | 8797 | | |
| Mr. Hussen | 8797 | | |
| International Development | | | |
| Ms. Vandenbeld | 8797 | | |
| Ms. Bibeau | 8798 | | |
| | | ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS | |
| | | Interparliamentary Delegations | |
| | | Mr. Nault | 8800 |
| | | Committees of the House | |
| | | Health | |
| | | Mr. Casey (Cumberland—Colchester) | 8800 |
| | | Petitions | |
| | | Democratic Reform | |
| | | Mr. Stewart | 8800 |
| | | Questions Passed as Orders for Returns | |
| | | Mr. Lamoureux | 8800 |
| | | GOVERNMENT ORDERS | |
| | | Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement Implementa- | |
| | | tion Act | |
| | | Bill C-31. Third reading | 8800 |
| | | Mr. Weir | 8800 |
| | | Mr. Lamoureux | 8802 |
| | | Mr. Cannings | 8802 |
| | | Ms. Gladu | 8803 |
| | | Ms. Watts | 8803 |
| | | Ms. Malcolmson | 8803 |
| | | Mr. Carrie | 8804 |
| | | Mr. Nater | 8805 |
| | | Mr. Clarke | 8805 |
| | | Mr. Ste-Marie | 8807 |
| | | Ms. Watts | 8807 |
| | | Division on motion deferred | 8807 |

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Income Tax Act

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Mr. Van Loan..... | 8808 |
| Bill C-323. Second reading..... | 8808 |
| Mr. Graham..... | 8810 |
| Mr. Stetski..... | 8811 |

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Ms. Petitpas Taylor..... | 8811 |
| Mr. Stetski..... | 8812 |
| Ms. Watts..... | 8813 |
| Ms. Tassi..... | 8814 |
| Ms. Malcolmson..... | 8815 |

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