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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, parliamentarians had an opportunity yesterday to unanimously condemn religious discrimination, including Islamophobia, but the Liberals did not rise to the occasion.

They voted against the motion condemning all forms of racism and religious discrimination, including discrimination against Muslims. They voted against the motion. The four opposition parties voted in favour of the motion, but it was defeated because of the Liberals.

Why? Are they trying to score political points with a certain demographic? Do they have their own petty partisan reasons? Were they against the initiative because it did not come from them? It was probably a combination of all three. It was dishonourable, it was petty, and it was classic Liberal Party partisanship and spite. The Liberals should be ashamed of themselves.

The Bloc Québécois will continue to condemn and call out all forms of religious discrimination and racism. That is what Quebecers expect of us, and that is what they expect of all their representatives.

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[English]

AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the excellent Nova Scotia Highlander Regimental Museum, with curator Ray Coulson, occupies one end of the Col. James Layton

Ralston Armoury in Amherst, Nova Scotia. It is there that one can find a monument to the 486 North Nova Scotia Highlanders, who went to war in Europe and did not return. Among those lost were several African Nova Scotians who grew up right in Cumberland county.

This is African Heritage Month, so let us especially remember the sacrifices of African Canadian soldiers, both men and women, sacrifices made at a time when they were not afforded every opportunity in society. At the very least, we should work now to preserve their memory and the monuments that reflect their incredible sacrifices.

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POLIO

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to draw attention to an important disease. With the help of Results Canada, Rotary International, UNICEF, and of course, my friends at Global Citizen, we have created an e-petition calling on the government to continue efforts to eradicate polio.

From 40 children affected every hour in 1988 to fewer than 40 children affected in all of 2016, we are very close to eradicating this disease. Sixteen million people are walking today who would otherwise have been paralyzed. However, if we do not keep up our efforts, major outbreaks could affect numerous polio-free countries, and within 10 years, 200,000 children a year could be affected by polio.

The only disease we have been able to eradicate so far in the world is smallpox. We are so close to eliminating polio. This would be a major milestone. We are in the final push to ensure that no one has to suffer from polio again. Our e-petition already has over 1,000 signatures. I hope all of us in this House, along with my fellow Canadians, will put their names to this petition to end polio for good.

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AN AMAZING MI'KMAQ WOMAN

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to stand today in this House and pay homage to a great woman from my riding of Miramichi—Grand Lake.

Statements by Members

Mary Catherine Clement grew up in the Mi'kmaq first nations community of Elsipogtog, where she lived with her mother, as her father was serving overseas during World War II. At the young age of 16, in an environment of racism and poverty, Mary left her home and pursued her education at Mount Saint Joseph Academy, where she graduated in nursing, but this was just the start for Mary. Last summer, at the age of 77, she won her 15th marathon medal in Brisbane, Australia.

Having worked all over the world, she never forgot the Mi'kmaq community she came from. I was proud to attend, last fall, the launch of a book about her life. Mary is a remarkable woman and a great role model for her community.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

PINK SHIRT DAY

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Pink Shirt Day, so I am proud to stand up with my fellow Canadians from across the country who are working hard to end bullying.

As a teacher, I have seen the devastating effects that bullying has on high school students. It is important to speak out against it and put a stop to behaviour and comments that are detrimental to the well-being of youth. Many organizations across the country are doing this difficult and crucial work every day. I want to thank them for their tireless efforts.

To anyone who is being bullied, I have the following message: do not hesitate to talk about what you are going through. Your family, your friends, your school, and various community organizations are there to help you. I encourage you to believe in yourself and your dreams.

Many artists, athletes, and community leaders who are very successful today have been bullied at some point in their lives.

Today, despite the rising tide of divisive politics that pit people against one another, we reaffirm our commitment to end bullying and stand up for the values of inclusion, compassion, and tolerance.

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[English]

PINK SHIRT DAY

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians are wearing pink shirts to stand up against bullying. This is a topic that touches everyone, because we have all been affected by bullying. I have experienced first-hand the impact bullying has had, as a counsellor who has worked with youth, youth who have felt that they had to eat their lunches in bathroom stalls and who were too afraid to come to school. Bullying also occurs at our workplaces, in relationships, and on the Internet, making it clear that we cannot sit idly on the sidelines.

Today is a call to action. Let us each make the pink shirt promise to stand up to bullying, spread kindness, and make the Internet a positive place.

CHARLOTTE OLESON

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the life of Charlotte Oleson, of Glenboro, Manitoba, who, sadly, passed away on February 19.

Her first elected office was as councillor for the Village of Glenboro, in 1977, including time as deputy mayor. Charlotte then went on to be elected to the Manitoba legislature in 1981, where she served until 1990. Charlotte served as minister of community services and minister of employment services and economic security, with responsibility for status of women, in the government of premier Gary Filmon. My wife Caroline had the honour of being special assistant to Minister Oleson.

Charlotte was an active member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba for over 40 years. She served as a director of the PC women's caucus and was given an honorary lifetime membership in 2000. Charlotte was also awarded the Canada 125 medal in 1992.

Charlotte leaves to mourn her passing her loving husband of 63 years, Stan, and her three children, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. I would like to thank Charlotte for her lifelong commitment to public service. She will be dearly missed by family, friends, and all Manitobans.

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[Translation]

FOUNDERS' DAY

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Founders' Day. Around the world we are celebrating the life of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell the founders of the Scouting and Guiding movements.

[English]

Girl Guides and Girl Scouts are also celebrating World Thinking Day. This year's theme is "Grow", as they look to expand the global reach of their sisterhood.

As a member of the scouting movement, I can attest to the positive impact scouting has had on my life. As per its motto, it has taught me to always be prepared. It has made me an environmentalist, not out of fear but out of respect for the wonder and beauty of our natural world. It has taught me to set goals and to work to achieve them. To this day, one of my proudest achievements is my Chief Scouts Award.

[Translation]

I encourage all families to support the Scouting and Guiding movement. I invite parents to consider signing up their children for Scouts or Guides.

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[English]

BELLEVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to offer a sincere message of thanks to a committed business leader from the Bay of Quinte, Mr. Bill Saunders.

Statements by Members

The Belleville Chamber of Commerce has enjoyed 152 years of service. For the past six years, Bill has been the voice and visionary leading the chamber forward. It serves over 600 local businesses and continues to expand. In reflecting on the operational successes of his term as CEO, I am reminded that across Canada, there are equally committed leaders like Bill who persistently fortify local commerce networks by building relational connectivity between community members. These leaders work hard to provide crucial foundational support for businesses of every scale. Our communities and our economies are made stronger for their dedicated efforts. For this reason, I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to join me in applause on behalf of each and every Bill Saunders found in their own ridings.

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●(1415)

[Translation]

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when illness grips a family, life becomes precious. When illness becomes part of our daily lives, we must get up, take stock, and become resilient. That is why today I want to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, my mother. She was my friend, my guiding light, my pillar of strength, my source of comfort during turbulent times in my life. She stood by me during the tough times.

Everything she was for me I now have to be for her because Alzheimer's disease has entered our daily lives and robbed us of so much. It is hard to watch as people we love deeply lose their memories and it is even harder to be so helpless in the face of this disease. Time spent in my mother's company can be both precious and painful.

Becoming a caregiver is not easy, but it is very rewarding.

Thank you, mom. I love you.

* * *

[English]

HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what do Guy Carbonneau, Shayne Corson, and Wendel Clark all have in common? They, along with several other NHL alumni, will be in Niagara Falls this Friday participating in the Hotel Dieu Shaver Foundation second annual Celebrity Ice Cup tournament.

This tournament, which mixes former NHL all-stars with recreational players, has raised over \$115,000 so far this year in support of the Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre. This cutting-edge specialty health care facility excels in providing rehab, complex care, and geriatric services throughout the Niagara region.

From teaching people how to drive a car with a prosthetic to helping individuals diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, to stroke rehab and palliative care, the dedicated staff at Hotel Dieu Shaver work tirelessly to help their patients and their families live life to the fullest.

As a strong supporter of Hotel Dieu Shaver, I want to express my true appreciation to the organizers and all participants, as well as wish them the best of luck, and congratulate them in helping to support such an important Niagara organization.

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HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are sobering. There are 35,000 people in our country who will be homeless tonight. There are 235,000 people who will experience homelessness this year. Our shelters are full, and are at capacity across the country.

For older adults and families, the stay is now as long as 20 days. One in four homeless are older adults or seniors, one in four homeless are women, and one in five homeless are youth.

My office has started a breakfast program to offer a warm meal every Saturday to those on the street, but we need to do so much more.

We will walk this Saturday, February 25, for the coldest night of the year, a walk to support those who are hurting, who have no hope, and feel helpless.

We will walk to support our Outflow shelter in Saint John—Rothesay, and the daunting task it faces to shelter homeless with little help. We will be walking and giving our support. It is the least we can do.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian Taxpayers Federation handed out its annual teddy awards for government waste.

The Canada Revenue Agency took home the top federal prize for subsidizing the sale of a home that costs about \$3.4 million. There was also a strong showing from Public Services and Procurement Canada, which was nominated twice for the rollout of the Phoenix payroll system, and for wasting money on office renovations for the Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Status of Women

However, the big winners today were the Ontario Liberals. Not only did they win in the tough provincial category for subsidizing Tesla electric vehicles, which retail at about \$135,000, they also took home the lifetime achievement award for their complete and utter bungling of the energy file, but there is hope for the federal Liberals.

Now that Gerry Butts has come to Ottawa, you are well on your way to winning your fair share of these waste awards.

●(1420)

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to direct his comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Willowdale.

*Oral Questions***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, residents of Willowdale were shocked and appalled to learn of a cowardly, anti-Semitic hate crime.

Incidents such as these, in which hateful notes were left at the doorsteps of residents, and mezuzahs were destroyed in an act of senseless vandalism, hold no place in Canadian society. I was particularly struck when one of this weekend's victims, Ms. Helen Chaiton, told me she was not the least bit surprised to be the target of such hatred.

We know that an attack on any one community is an attack on us all. For that reason we must condemn all forms of intolerance, and be ever vigilant in protecting Canadian diversity. The vandalism in my riding and other recent demonstrations of hate and bigotry do not represent the Canada we are recognized for.

The Canada we can all stand proud of is the one I witnessed the night prior to this terrible crime, when I attended an event convened by a neighbouring mosque and synagogue in Thornhill to mark the anniversary of their coming together a year earlier to jointly sponsor a family of Syrian newcomers.

As we move forward, let us follow their shining example to make sure there is no place for those who wish to divide us.

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ROSEMARY BROWN

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of Black History Month, I want to honour a colleague and friend, Rosemary Brown.

Social worker, activist, politician, and determined feminist, Rosemary was dedicated to promoting gender and racial equality at home and abroad. As the first Black woman elected to a Canadian legislature, and the first woman to run for the leadership of a federal party, she opened doors for more women and people of colour to hold public office.

As an MLA in British Columbia, she worked to eliminate sexism from school textbooks, to end discrimination on the basis of age and marital status, and to increase the number of women on public boards.

Rosemary was the CEO of the MATCH International Women's Fund, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and a recipient of the Order of Canada.

Rosemary Brown dedicated her life to public service and to the belief, as she said, that:

Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.

* * *

PARLIAMENTARIANS HOCKEY GAME FOR CHARITY

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday night, the Liberal and Conservative hockey teams faced off in a battle to raise money for the Terry Fox Foundation and played for the Hec Clouthier Memorial Trophy in a spirited affair that determined Canadian Parliamentary hockey supremacy.

The game began with you, Mr. Speaker, playing with the Tories and, as you know, you were traded to the Liberals in a blockbuster mid-game trade. The Conservatives scored first, and put the overtaxed Liberals in a small deficit. We tried to warn the Liberals about deficits, but without a plan to return to surplus, that small first period hole quickly grew out of control.

When the final ballots were ranked, the Conservatives had nine and the Liberals had three. First past the goal post nine times, and no referendum was required.

While the Conservatives skated away victorious, the real winner was the Terry Fox Foundation, raising money for cancer research which received close to \$6,000 in donations from players and fans. Thanks to everyone who came out to support the cause.

The Speaker: It was good fun. Jackets back on now, folks.

* * *

● (1425)

[Translation]

PINK SHIRT DAY

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Pink Shirt Day, an initiative to combat all forms of bullying against anyone of any age, anywhere.

On this day, people wear pink shirts to raise awareness about the bullying of children and adults that goes on every day. Bullying is never acceptable, and its consequences on a person's life and self-esteem can be serious.

We are all capable of showing kindness, compassion, and generosity. As the Pink Shirt Day slogan says so well, being nice is always a choice worth making.

All of us can help get this message out and work on eliminating bullying.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were surprised to wake up this morning to news that the Prime Minister has sold part of our health care system to China. He has approved the sale of one of British Columbia's largest seniors homes operators to a Chinese company, Anbang Insurance. This company is described as having "a very murky ownership structure."

Can the Prime Minister please tell us exactly who owns Anbang Insurance?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a trading nation that relies on engagement with countries around the world to create good jobs in Canada and to create economic growth.

We have a policy that allows us to draw in global investments to create jobs and opportunities for Canadians while at the same time ensuring that they are in Canadians' interests, and to the benefit of our country as we move forward in a thoughtful and responsible way. That is exactly what we did in this case.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is shocking that the Prime Minister would agree to sell a Canadian health care facility to China without doing the due diligence.

Last fall, several Wall Street firms, including Morgan Stanley, refused to work with Anbang Insurance, because they could not get any information on structure and ownership. With so many questions surrounding this company, how could the Prime Minister say yes to this Chinese takeover?

How many more of these deals is he going to make with China?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to be open to investments that create middle-class jobs, economic growth, and long-term prosperity for Canadians. Cedar Tree has confirmed a strong commitment to the ongoing quality of operations of Canadian retirement residences and to its health care workers.

It will remain subject to provincial oversight on seniors care facilities, ensuring the rules for the care of seniors will continue to be followed, and will keep the current number of full and part-time jobs.

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[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the Prime Minister to assure Canadians that he was not going to do away with consecutive sentencing in the Criminal Code. He did not really give me an answer. Our Conservative government believed that murderers deserve a life sentence for every life they have taken.

Does the Prime Minister agree that every life is important and that murderers should be given a life sentence for every innocent victim they have killed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of any government is to protect citizens, get justice for victims, and respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That is exactly what I asked our Minister of Justice to do by reviewing and examining our Criminal Code, and that is exactly what we are going to do while making sure, of course, that our justice system is independent.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Kathy and Alvin Liknes and their five-year-old grandson Nathan were brutally murdered by Douglas Garland. However,

because of consecutive sentences, he will spend the rest of his life in jail with no chance of parole.

While nothing can fix what happened to that family, at least they can take some comfort in knowing that they will not be re-victimised. Does the Prime Minister agree with the sentence Douglas Garland received? Yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports the work of our judges and judiciary. As a government we know that we need to make sure that we are protecting the safety of our citizens, getting justice for victims, and indeed respecting our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That is exactly what our Minister of Justice is committed to doing as we look over the Criminal Code, and make improvements to make sure we are protecting victims, protecting Canadians, and respecting our charter.

* * *

● (1430)

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying more and getting less. The Liberals are hiking taxes and adding debt. For what? Canadians were promised a stronger economy and better jobs, but a lot of the new jobs created are not better jobs.

Only one in five jobs created have been full-time. Last year, the economy grew slower than it did under the previous government. All this spending and taxes is hurting the middle class, and those who are looking to join it.

How is the Prime Minister going to fix this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has remained focused on the middle class, and those working hard to join it. We lowered taxes on the middle class by raising them on the wealthiest 1%.

We brought in a Canada child benefit that gives more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families, which will help them with the costs of groceries, school supplies, and raising their kids, and by not helping millionaire families with child benefits like the previous government did.

On top of that, we will be reducing child poverty by 40% with the CCB. This is the kind of focus we have on creating jobs and opportunity, help for the middle class, and those working hard to join it.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Immigration was asked about the American treatment of refugees and he said, “nothing has changed”. Nothing has changed. Really?

There is a massive immigration crackdown inside the U.S. Hundreds of refugees are risking life and limb to cross the border. Today Amnesty International has said Trump's “fear and scapegoating” has increased risk to human rights. All this and another executive order on immigration is on its way.

Does the Prime Minister agree with the minister that nothing has changed and that the U.S. is still a safe country for refugees?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to do two things in regard to the United States and the world. We will stand up for Canadian values and defend the principles that have made this country strong, free, and great. At the same time, we will work to ensure the protection of Canadian jobs, opportunities for growth, and the success of our small and large businesses.

This is the balance that Canadians expect of this government. That is what we will continue to do throughout our relationship with the United States and the world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to listen to talking points on the economy when what we are talking about is more and more asylum seekers risking their lives to cross the border and come to Canada.

The government needs to act quickly and address the lack of resources by taking concrete immediate action. With spring right around the corner, the situation is likely to change quickly. We need more border officers, but we also need to suspend the safe third country agreement.

The Prime Minister has said that everyone is welcome here in Canada. When will this government get its head out of the sand and take action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised to see the NDP, which has a history of defending workers' rights, tossing principles meant to protect jobs and create a brighter future for Canadian families right out the window.

We know that we need to remain welcoming and open to the world, but we also need to protect Canadians' jobs and the prosperity of everyone who enters and lives in this country. That is exactly what the Liberal Party of Canada will do.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do stand up for workers, but we also stand up for human rights. That is what this is about.

One Canadian had his private life scrutinized in the presence of American customs officers before being interrogated, detained for several hours, and turned away at the border. That arbitrary and discriminatory decision was made after the officers took his smart phone and discovered his sexual orientation.

More and more Canadians are being unfairly turned back at the border, and Bill C-23 will pave the way for even more abusive practices.

How is the government going to stand up for human rights and Canadians' rights?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, anyone who wants to cross the border to the United States has to go through customs. Having pre-clearance in Canada not only streamlines the movement of goods and services and makes it easier to get to all U.S. airports as a domestic rather than an international traveller, but also ensures that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is applied on Canadian soil, even within American pre-clearance zones. That is an added layer of protection that Canadians would not have going through customs in the United States.

● (1435)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister guaranteed that no Canadians would be mistreated while trying to cross the U.S. border, but what we have seen in case after case is very troubling. Muslim Canadians have been targeted. We have seen evidence on racial profiling and repeated cases of the privacy of Canadians being invaded.

What will the government do to secure clear assurances for Canadians who wish to cross the border? When will the Prime Minister stand up for Canadians? After all it is Pink Shirt Day. Will he stand up to the bully?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand how important it is to defend our sovereignty and we certainly defend our capacity to make determinations about who gets to come to Canada and how. That is something we have demonstrated amply over decades of our history. Similarly, we respect the responsibility of other countries to make determinations about who comes into their borders.

What we do on pre-clearance in Canada ensures that it is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that protects Canadians and others on Canadian soil even though they are going through American customs systems. It is a good system that allows for smoother movement of goods and services, easier access to the United States, and protection.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I encourage the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to not interrupt and listen to the answers.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

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[*Translation*]

PENSIONS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people are nervous about the upcoming budget and rightly so. This government has some interesting plans. The Prime Minister just referred to the 1% tax increase for the wealthiest Canadians. He failed to mention that he miscalculated and is off by \$2 billion, so he has to run \$20-billion deficits. Seniors are worried about pension income splitting.

Oral Questions

Is the government going to go after seniors, or will it allow them to split their pension income? This is very important to people who have to make ends meet solely on this income.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did some very important things for Canada's seniors in our first budget. We increased the guaranteed income supplement for the most vulnerable. We brought the retirement age back to 65. We will continue to ensure that our economy is healthy and that our most vulnerable are in good shape. That is a very important priority for our country.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): That was not an answer, Mr. Speaker. There is another matter that is of great concern to us. Not only are forestry workers across the country having to deal with the uncertainty around the softwood lumber agreement with the U.S., but now, they can add the woodland caribou to their list of concerns. In 2015, our former government announced the introduction of a measure to increase our knowledge on the issue, which we had been hearing about for some time. This government often says it bases its decisions on scientific evidence, and yet, we do not know enough about the caribou.

Will this government give itself the tools it needs to gain a better understanding of the situation of the woodland caribou in Canada and not cut jobs? I hope they will do their homework before making cuts.

[*English*]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made a commitment to Canadians to protect and support biodiversity in this country and to protect the recovery of species at risk, including caribou. Our government is very focused on ensuring that Canada continues to have a robust natural resources sector that creates jobs for middle-class Canadians.

We are working with the provinces, territories, indigenous people, and stakeholders to support their efforts in protecting caribou. This is why today the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is meeting with her provincial and territorial counterparts to develop a plan for the protection of caribou, which takes into account those economic circumstances.

* * *

TAXATION

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months the human resources committee has been asking witnesses how to offset the burden of a carbon tax. We heard it loud and clear, "Don't charge it in the first place". It is too bad the Wynne Liberals in Ontario did not get this advice before ramming a similar tax on small businesses, families, and commuters.

When will the Prime Minister look at how Ontario has been devastated and stop forcing this bad idea on Canadians?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, putting a price on pollution is one component of our plan

to address climate change and create jobs. I should note that 80% of Canadians already live in a jurisdiction that has a price on carbon. This is due to the leadership shown by the provinces, given the complete lack of action on the climate file over the previous 10 years under the previous government.

Pricing pollution has been endorsed by economists, leading Canadian businesses, and by leading Conservatives, including Preston Manning, Patrick Brown, Mark Cameron, and a number of MPs on that side of the House.

The federal-provincial agreement on the pan-Canadian framework contains a number of measures, including pricing of pollution, that will effectively address climate change and create good middle-class jobs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1440)

The Speaker: Order, please. I know the member for Calgary Signal Hill is going to want to hear the answer as well as the question.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "heat or eat" was the issue raised at a recent meeting of the Barrie chapter of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. The sad reality is that especially Ontario seniors are facing this choice, because of the failed green energy policy of Kathleen Wynne and the Ontario Liberals. Now, with Wynne's friends running the Prime Minister's Office, Ontario seniors will have to pay a federal Liberal carbon tax on things like home heating and electricity, driving the cost of everything even higher.

Why do Liberals force seniors to make a choice between heating their homes and eating?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take this opportunity to remind all members of the House of the very important agenda we have around supporting seniors. We have moved the age of eligibility for old age security to 65, which will prevent 100,000 vulnerable seniors from falling into severe poverty. We have increased the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$1,000, which will benefit almost one million seniors, taking 30,000 of them out of poverty. This is a clear signal of our long-standing agenda—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberal government is borrowing a lot of money to carry out projects and make its friends happy. However, the problem is that the government is forgetting that all of that money will have to be paid back one day. Our children and grandchildren will be the ones footing the bill.

Meanwhile, the Liberal government is raising taxes on Canadian workers. As a result, families, entrepreneurs, and students are now paying more taxes than they were two years ago.

Oral Questions

With the new budget just a few weeks away, will the Minister of Finance commit to not increasing Canadians' payroll taxes?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the results are very clear. We have cut taxes for the middle class. That is the truth.

Thanks to our tax cuts, individuals are paying \$330 less in taxes this year and families are paying \$540 less. The nine out of ten families who are receiving the Canada child benefit are getting, on average, an additional \$2,300 this year. There is more money for the middle class and for the most vulnerable members of our society. We are going to continue to help them through our program.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' tax changes have benefited the wealthiest Canadians.

Those earning \$44,000 received nothing; those earning \$60,000 a year made it out with barely two and a half bucks more per week. However, those earning \$199,000 a year hit the jackpot. That is the Liberal Party's reality.

Will the government tell Canadian workers the truth and reassure them that there will be no new taxes in the next budget? That is what we want to know.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the truth could not be plainer: nine out of 10 families with children are better off.

For example, a woman with one child earning \$30,000 a year will receive up to \$5,400. On average, these families will receive \$2,300 more than last year. It is a big change and taxes are lower. Improving the situation of the middle class and the most vulnerable will continue to be the goal of our program.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new research report states that the benefits touted in CETA are based on flawed, unrealistic economic models. It concludes that CETA will result in 23,000 jobs lost in Canada, and increased inequality.

The NDP has been saying this all along. The Prime Minister himself admits these realities exist, but only in Europe before a sea of tuxedos and ball gowns.

Again, does the government have a plan to address the job losses and increased inequality that will be generated in Canada by CETA?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CETA is the most progressive trade agreement ever negotiated by Canada, or the EU. It will create jobs, bolster our shared prosperity, and strengthen the middle class.

The study the member has referred to does not even take into account tariffs. However, as our Prime Minister said in his address to the European Parliament, this is a "forward looking agreement". It reflects a progressive trade agenda. It empowers societies to stand up for the public good. It is one that puts small and medium-size or enterprises at the heart of what we are focusing on. It puts the

interests of workers and consumers at the centre of our negotiations and gives access to small and medium-sized businesses—

• (1445)

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

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while in opposition, the Prime Minister said that the previous government "failed to adequately address the concerns of Canadian sectors that may be negatively impacted by CETA, including Newfoundland and Labrador's fish processors". However, now in power, his government is saying that it will not offer compensation.

Which is it? Since the Liberals agreed to CETA, which they know will cost thousands of jobs in Atlantic Canada, will the minister work with the industry and provinces to offer proper compensation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it perhaps should not surprise you that we disagree with the premise of the member's question. We think CETA will offer Atlantic Canadians thousands of opportunities for more and better jobs. That is why we are so proud of this historic agreement. That is why my colleagues and I have been working with provincial premiers, fisheries ministers, and innovation ministers to ensure the Atlantic economy, and every part of the country, is in a position to maximize the benefit from this historic agreement.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have approved the purchase of the largest elder care facility in B.C. by a Chinese firm with a sketchy background, previously investigated by the U.S. and found lacking.

Anbang Insurance has uncertain ownership and uncertain connection to the Chinese government. Why have the Liberals put seniors care in B.C. at risk by approving this deal?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows and as the Prime Minister has reiterated, we are open to trade and investment. Under the Investment Canada Act we did a thorough review and we looked at what was in the overall net economic benefit for Canada. Based on that, we were able to obtain the commitments with regard to job levels with this transaction, with regard to the expansion of facilities and financing them.

The bottom line is that it is about growing the economy, creating jobs, and strengthening the middle class. That is exactly what this deal is doing.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rules state that the Prime Minister must not discuss government business at Liberal Party fundraisers, but on November 7, the host of that event said that he did just that.

He proudly told *The Globe and Mail* that he discussed the need for Chinese investments in Canadian seniors homes with the Prime Minister.

The review process has been fast-tracked by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and the sale approved, so what we would like to hear is this. Was this issue actually discussed at this fundraiser? Canadians deserve to know.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must be clear that the Commissioner of Lobbying looks at the activity of lobbyists.

With respect to previous fundraising activity, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has said that no rules were broken.

That being said, we recognize that we can do more, and that is why the Minister of Democratic Institutions will introduce new legislation to make political fundraising even more open and more transparent.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it should be no surprise that this transaction was approved. It is one of British Columbia's biggest retirement home chains, including locations in Kamloops, British Columbia.

This was just three months after a Chinese lobbyist bought access to him at a cosy fundraiser. The U.S. realized that this was a murky deal with cloudy ownership.

My question to the Prime Minister is this. Was this approval bought?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to be clear that when it comes to the previous fundraising activity, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has said that no rules were broken.

That being said, we recognize that more can be done. That is why the Minister of Democratic Institutions will introduce new legislation to make political fundraising more open and more transparent.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows about the Liberal Party's questionable practice of holding \$1,500 fundraisers that give guests the opportunity for private discussions about specific projects with ministers and the Prime Minister.

We just learned that the government has approved agreements with a Chinese company to buy a major retirement home chain in British Columbia.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether executives or representatives of Chinese insurance company Anbang paid \$1,500 for privileged access to the Liberals, yes or no?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that this particular transaction is subject to the provision under the Investment Canada Act. That is the act that I am responsible for as the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development,

We make sure we do a thorough analysis, and any decision we make is of overall net economic benefit to all Canadians.

We looked at the transaction. We made sure that the employment levels were significant. We looked at it with respect to the opportunity, the economy, and expansion opportunities for the retirement facility.

The bottom line is, we did a thorough analysis. We made sure it was under the Investment Canada Act.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is about to deport Mrs. Azizi, a 60-year-old woman of Iranian origin who fought hard for human rights in Iran.

The government claims that it is safe to send her back to her country of origin, but Iranian authorities are known for harsh treatment of their opponents. They executed Ms. Azizi's husband, in fact.

Will the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness therefore take a look at her case right away? It is urgent.

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the matter, but as the hon. member can appreciate, I am not allowed by federal privacy laws to comment on specific cases.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last weekend my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé and I demonstrated in front of the Minister of Transport's office alongside the residents of Neuville, Saint-Cuthbert, and Mascouche who are disappointed, angry in fact, about the scant attention they are receiving from the minister.

Aerodromes are being developed with no real public consultation, without consultation with other levels of government, and without social licence. This is shameful.

Oral Questions

Why, despite opposition from the public, the municipalities, and the Government of Quebec, is the minister putting the interests of private developers before the interests of the residents?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, decisions regarding aerodromes fall within federal jurisdiction.

However, I want to reassure my colleague that we are in fact consulting. That is part of our decision-making process. We must first ensure that the aerodrome will be safe, and second, that it is in the public's interest.

I issued a ministerial order last March regarding the Mascouche project, and I also encouraged the same procedure for the Saint-Cuthbert airport. We are following the procedures and we are consulting before making any decisions.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's forestry industry is important to our communities and provides good jobs to thousands of workers right across Canada.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources explain to the House how the government is working with the provinces to preserve the vitality and resilience of this industry?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for his excellent question.

We worked intensively with the provinces and the softwood lumber industry. Reaching a new softwood lumber trade agreement remains a priority for our government. Today, I am announcing a federal-provincial task force on softwood lumber. We are joining forces to address the challenges facing the industry, the workers, and their families.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the parliamentary budget officer reinforced that the Liberals have failed to be transparent to get infrastructure built across Canada and that smaller communities are being shut out. The Liberals are now funnelling \$15 billion away from community infrastructure to fund their new bank, a bank that will have no transparency.

Will the Liberals stop this wrong-headed plan and return the \$15 billion to communities that need it the most?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of doubling our infrastructure investments. Out of the \$180 billion we will invest, only 8% will be flowing through the bank and we will leverage that money to engage the private sector to build more infrastructure to be able to meet this need, in order to close the gap that the previous government left through its inaction for the last decade.

● (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should talk to the parliamentary budget officer. I think that conversation would be rather enlightening.

Yesterday, the parliamentary budget officer said that he might not be able to conduct an analysis of the new infrastructure bank.

It comes as no surprise that a Liberal initiative lacks transparency, but this only adds to our mistrust of the Liberals, who would rather come up with even more bureaucratic structures for their friends than approve job-creating projects across Canada.

Does the minister still plan to implement his bank or will he finally approve the thousands of projects for the small and medium-sized municipalities that are still waiting for a green light?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have approved 1,300 projects since taking over and 50% of those projects are in communities with a population of fewer than 100,000. Out of those 1,300 projects, based on the information provided to us by our partners, provinces, and municipalities, 60% of those projects are currently under way, creating opportunities for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We are proud of what we are doing in partnership, we are delivering infrastructure commitments that we made to Canadians.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Prime Minister broke with standard diplomatic process by announcing Stéphane Dion's dual diplomatic assignments to Europe before consulting the intended hosts. While dual responsibilities do occur occasionally, the Berlin and Brussels postings are among the most important relationships Canada has to manage. Could the Prime Minister explain the logic of Mr. Dion's twofold appointment?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Stéphane Dion has always fought for a better Canada, a greener Canada, a Canada that is more united, and a Canada that is strong.

The European Union and Germany are strong friends and allies of Canada, as emphasized—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the answer. Members should see enough pink shirts around to know that it is anti-bullying day, and certainly interrupting and yelling is a form of aggression and bullying. Let us not have it here.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, our relationship with Germany and the European Union was evident in the Prime Minister's visit last week.

Oral Questions

We know that Monsieur Dion is extremely competent, talented, and progressive, and that Canadians can be assured that he will fiercely represent Canada and strengthen our relationship with both Germany and the European Union.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many of Canada's foreign service professionals, past and present, are highly critical of the mixed message the dual appointment sends to Germany and the EU.

A former Canadian high commissioner to the United Kingdom, also a former ambassador to the EU, says "We look like amateur hour." Another former diplomat, also on the public record, says, "It will be impossible to do justice to both EU and Germany with one ambassador".

Again, can the Prime Minister explain what message he is sending to our important allies with this bizarre appointment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the hon. Stéphane Dion has always fought for a better Canada, a greener Canada, a more united Canada, and a stronger Canada. He is extremely competent, talented, and progressive.

The European Union and Germany are good friends and allies. As the Prime Minister emphasized in his speech before the EU Parliament last Thursday and during his bilateral visit to Germany, Canadians can rest assured that Mr. Dion will proudly represent Canada throughout the world.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week the Liberal government approved a foreign takeover of vital health care and seniors facilities in British Columbia.

We know Anbang is a massive company whose ownership structure is murky at best. Recently, Morgan Stanley refused to do business with it, because it does not meet its code of ethics.

Seniors, health care workers, and British Columbians are greatly concerned by this takeover. Can the Prime Minister explain exactly what the net benefit of this takeover is, and whether this issue was ever discussed at a Liberal cash-for-access fundraiser?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we engaged with the B.C. government to make sure it was up to speed and to get its feedback.

Overall, this is about our government's commitment to being open to investment. We realize when we are open to investments, it helps grow the economy and create jobs.

Speaking about jobs, one of the commitments we obtained was to make sure that we have the current levels that exist within the organization. More importantly, we are going to make sure that we work with the company associated with this transaction to grow and expand its facilities.

The bottom line is this was done under the Investment Canada Act. There was a due process that was followed. This is in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

● (1500)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it took a whole year and a half for the Prime Minister to visit the Far North, but northerners are still waiting for action from his government.

This week, northern leaders are meeting to discuss and develop a plan for the future of the Port of Churchill. They want the federal government to step in and nationalize the port, and work with first nations and local partners to take it forward. However, first, we need the government to stand up to the American billionaire who is holding us hostage.

When will the government show leadership, step in, stand up for Canadian jobs, and save the port and the community of Churchill?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to go to Churchill and visit with the northern delegation. Based on the conversations I had with the community in the town hall session we had, our focus is really around jobs and growth in that area.

That is why, under the Western Economic Diversification fund, we committed to \$4.6 million. These funds are allowing opportunities for people within that region to find opportunities for good jobs, particularly around Arctic research and tourism. We have approved a few projects.

It is about jobs. It is about supporting that region. We are committed to that particular initiative.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberal decision to arbitrarily lift the visa requirement for Mexico will cost Canadian taxpayers at least a quarter of a billion dollars.

What is worse is that government officials also advised the Liberals that lifting the visa requirement on Mexico could mean that travellers involved in organized crime, illegal drugs, or human trafficking could enter Canada with greater ease.

Given that Mexico is a key origin point for drugs like cocaine, in lifting the visa requirement, are the Liberals charging Canadian taxpayers a quarter of a billion dollars to put their safety at risk?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to rebuilding and strengthening the relationship with Mexico that was considerably damaged by the previous government.

Oral Questions

I can tell members that the Mexico visa lift has resulted in lasting economic benefits for Canada, more tourism, and more international students coming to Canada. We work very closely with Mexican officials to address any risks and we continue to make sure that we work closely with Mexico to ensure that the visa lift is a success.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, child killer and triple murderer Douglas Garland was sentenced to life in prison. Thanks to consecutive sentencing passed by the previous Conservative government, he will not be eligible for parole for 75 years.

Since the Prime Minister will not, will the Minister of Justice assure Canadians that consecutive sentencing for multiple murderers will not be gutted by the Liberals' so-called Criminal Code review, yes or no?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer this question, and want to emphasize that egregious, heinous crimes are wrong and should be punished.

In terms of the Criminal Code, it already imposes the highest mandatory sentence of life imprisonment for murder, and judges have the ability to exercise their discretion in imposing consecutive sentences. We recognize and applaud judges who undertake to impose, based on their discretion, based on the individual in front of them, the appropriate sentence for the appropriate crime.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will try another question for the justice minister.

Women and children are disproportionately the victims of human trafficking and are most commonly exploited for sex, yet the Liberals introduced Bill C-38, which would remove the requirement for human trafficking sentences to be served consecutively.

If the Prime Minister wants to have any credibility as a feminist, then he should start protecting the rights of human trafficking victims over the rights of perpetrators. Why is he giving human traffickers a break and turning his back on their victims?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it gives me the opportunity to speak to Bill C-38, which we introduced. Our government is committed to combatting human trafficking and better protecting victims of these crimes. We are going to ensure that this bill moves forward as expeditiously as possible. The changes that we made with respect to the previous private member's bill, Bill C-452, were to ensure that our bill is in compliance with the charter.

* * *

● (1505)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my community of London, Ontario, is home to one of the largest Yazidi populations in Canada.

[Translation]

Every member of the House agrees that helping the world's most vulnerable is a proud Canadian tradition.

[English]

Yazidi women, children, and other survivors of Daesh will be arriving in Canada, and the almost 400 who have already arrived have been through severe physical and emotional trauma. Would the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please give this House an update on efforts to help this vulnerable group adjust to life in Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for London North Centre for that excellent question and all members of this House for their advocacy and leadership on this really important matter.

Yazidi women and girls and other victims and survivors of Daesh have suffered the worst atrocities imaginable. We continue to work very closely with provinces, municipalities, and other government agencies, including school boards, to make sure that the right settlement supports are in place to meet the group's psychological and integration needs.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank Nadia Murad, with whom I spoke last night, for her tireless leadership. We know that Canadians will never forget her leadership on this file.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another day, another way the Liberals are trying to overtax small businesses. When they announced new rules requiring Canadians to report the sale of their principal residence to the CRA, it turns out it was just the Liberals trying to sneak in another new tax grab on small business owners.

Financial advisers are warning small business owners that this change will eliminate the capital gains exemption on the sale of their primary residence if they run a business from their home office. The Liberal war on small business continues.

Would the finance minister commit today to reversing this attack on hard-working Canadian small-business owners?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to improving our economy, which will help small and medium-sized businesses to be successful. We know that making sure people actually register the principal residence when they sell it means that people do pay their fair share of taxes, if they are in fact required to pay taxes. We do know that in this country people have the ability to sell their principal residence without taxes, assuming that they in fact have that as their principal residence. That is the law of the land and that continues to be our position.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats believe that any legislation resulting from the government's accessibility tour starts with the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The measures resulting from consultations must deliver more than voluntary standards and awareness-raising activities. They have to support implementation. Will the Liberals do what they promised during the election and implement these important measures?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's dedication to the accessibility file.

We are fully committed to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. That is why we were so excited to announce recently that our government, working with provincial and territorial governments, is working on a possible accession to the optional protocol contained within the UN convention.

We have a strong history of anti-discrimination protection for Canadians with disabilities, including the UN convention, including the charter, including human rights law, including employment equity, and very soon, including accessibility legislation.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 21, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie went to Paris for the Protecting Children from War conference.

[English]

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development give this House an update on the announcement she made in Canada's name?

[Translation]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brossard—Saint-Lambert for her question.

I am proud to announce Canada's support for the Safe Schools Declaration.

[English]

Safe and peaceful access to schools allows children to obtain an education that will help them reach their full potential without fear of being targeted, especially in conflict areas. Education is a fundamental right and we are proud to join 58 other nations in endorsing this important declaration.

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to make job creation and economic development a priority. Canada's National Optics Institute, INO, is a world leader in innovation and has a plan to create jobs in Ontario, Alberta, and Quebec.

This is a perfect opportunity for the Liberal government to create jobs. Many organizations, including the Conseil du patronat, support INO's request.

Will this government finally do something to create wealth all across Canada and help a host of new businesses get started?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that our government supports this initiative because, as he mentioned, it benefits not only Quebec but other parts of Canada as well. This is part of our government's ongoing commitment to job creation within that region. Most recently, I was in Mirabel and we secured 900 jobs and created 1,000 jobs. The commitment to Bombardier secured significant jobs as well. The bottom line is we are committed to that region, committed to jobs, committed to growth, and we will support this particular initiative.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, over the years, Canada has led in UN negotiations to ban biological weapons, ban chemical weapons, ban cluster munitions, and ban landmines. Just last week the organizational meetings began for the next frontier: to ban nuclear weapons. But Canada was not there, while 101 other countries were. I would like to ask if the hon. Prime Minister can assure this House that Canada will play a leading role once again to band with the world to end the threat of nuclear war.

Government Orders

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in regard to the concern from my friend, I want to assure her and all Canadians that we are working hard to ensure that our children inherit a world free from nuclear weapons, but that requires real concrete action. That is what Canada is doing for the first time ever. Let me be clear, that it was the first time ever that Canada rallied 177 states to support a resolution calling for a fissile material cut-off treaty. This is genuine and tangible change, and this will help phase out nuclear weapons and allow us to get to a world free from nuclear weapons for our children.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Greg Ottenbreit, Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health for the Province of Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

The House resumed from February 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-18.

● (1520)

[English]

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

*(Division No. 202)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Ambrose
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bains	Barlow
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Bittle	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brown
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins

Cannings	Caron
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chan
Chen	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clement	Cooper
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Eglinski
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Falk	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Gallant
Garneau	Garrison
Généreux	Genius
Gerretsen	Gladu
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Jolibois
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kang
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kwan	Lake
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
Lukiwski	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Malcolmson	Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nater	Nault
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
O'Toole	Ouellette
Paul-Hus	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor

Philpott
Poilievre
Quach
Raitt
Rankin
Rayes
Rempel
Ritz
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Saroya
Scheer
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sopuck
Spengemann
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Trudeau
Van Kesteren
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer— 291

Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ramsey
Ratansi
Reid
Rioux
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Sorbara
Stetski
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudel
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

NAYS

Members

Richards— 1

PAIRED

Members

Jones

Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by eight minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement for Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Republic of Korea”, done at Seoul, on

Routine Proceedings

December 20, 2016. An explanatory memorandum is included with this treaty.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts:

● (1525)

[English]

The 21st report entitled, “Special Examination Report—International Development Research Centre”, from the “2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

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

[Translation]

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights entitled “The New Process for Judicial Appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

ALGOMA CENTRAL RAILWAY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this e-petition, signed by more than 500 individuals, in support of the Algoma passenger train service. It was sponsored by the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, which created two online petitions as well as postcard and paper petition campaigns.

[Translation]

The Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains wants to remind the government that for more than 100 years this passenger train provided safe and affordable access to nature in the region throughout the season, while supporting the tourism economy along this route.

[English]

The train provided access for first nations to their remote and traditional territory and was the only safe option available for 75% of the properties along that line. Since passenger service has stopped, people have been stranded when their vehicles have been badly damaged on industrial roads that are not maintained for public use.

Government Orders

Businesses cite the social, economic, employment, and tax-generating benefits documented in a 2015 BDO Canada report. That is why these petitioners are calling on the government to put the Algoma passenger train back in service and to ensure that the mission of Transport Canada is fulfilled.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stayed at Fishermen's Cove RV and Campground in Hunts Point, Nova Scotia, located steps from the Atlantic Ocean in the riding of South Shore—St. Margarets.

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

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition organized by Nicole Crellin, director of Youth for Human Rights Toronto.

The petitioners call upon Parliament and public and private sector organizations to promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through education campaigns, events, and broad publication and dissemination of the declaration to children and adults throughout Canada.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first is primarily from people in the area of Salmon Arm, British Columbia.

The petitioners call upon this Parliament to establish a tax rebate. One way they suggest to establish it would be to eliminate the goods and services tax to encourage the purchase of new hybrid and electric vehicles. A big transformation is happening in our vehicle fleet, and the more we get internal combustion engines off the roads, the more greenhouse gases we will reduce.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents within my own riding. Petitions keep coming in from petitioners who call on the House of Commons to at long last get rid of the perverse first past the post voting system and to bring in fair voting with proportional representation.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PRECLEARANCE ACT, 2016

The House resumed from February 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the people of Canada and the many travellers, I am proud to speak to this legislation that will allow Canada to move forward with ratifying the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air transport pre-clearance between the Government of Canada and the government of the United States of America.

As members of the House know, our government has made it a priority to build a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. Canada and the United States share the longest, most open, and most successful international border in history.

Bill C-23, the pre-clearance act, reflects our united efforts to maintain and develop the success of this border, wherein security and efficiency go hand in hand in expediting legitimate and vital cross-border trade and travel. Both our nations believe in the importance of encouraging economic growth and building effective trade relationships with our allies. Both our nations believe in the benefits of close collaboration with each other, and with our allies to guard against shared threats to our security. It is from this foundation that Canada and the United States have built the robust economic partnership we enjoy today.

In my time today, I will look at how pre-clearance is working at present, as well as the tremendous economic opportunities it will offer in the future. I will also address the amendment the NDP has moved with reasons for opposing this bill. The NDP amendment asks us to reject the bill because of what it refers to as the climate of uncertainty at the U.S. border, as well as the impacts on new American policies with respect to immigration, and concern about privacy rights. I disagree with those reasons, and I will express why a little later.

Travel for vacation with family or friends, or travel for business is a prime or popular experience for many Canadians and Canadian businesses. Pearson airport, in my home city of Mississauga, recorded more than 12 million travellers, both ways, between Canada and the United States in 2016. More than 400,000 flow back and forth between Canada and the United States every single day. Close to \$2.5 billion in two-way trade from multiple sectors move cross-border between us every single day.

Clearly, our robust partnership is not just nice to have, it is vital for our continued security and economic growth. To this end, we must have an effective border that is at once closed to security threats and open to legitimate trade and travel. The legislation before us is a great example of how we are working to manage our borders better.

For travellers going from Canada to the United States, pre-clearance has existed in one form or another for more than 60 years. It is currently available at eight Canadian airports. Pre-clearance allows travellers to complete American customs and immigration procedures in Canada before leaving Canada. Once they land in the U.S., they forego customs lineups, reduce delays, and inefficiencies. Direct access is provided to many destinations that would otherwise require connecting flights, as some of these destinations do not have customs arrangements.

If pre-clearance did not exist, Toronto Pearson International Airport, for example, could not offer direct flights to almost half of its destinations in the United States, because those airports do not have customs and immigration facilities. The impact is substantial. With pre-clearance services at Pearson airport travellers have direct flights to 50 U.S. destinations, but would be limited to a mere 27 if these services were not available.

In addition to the substantial economic benefits, there are security benefits to be found, notably because goods and travellers are pre-cleared before they leave the country. Pre-clearance officers are able to refuse inadmissible goods and travellers before entering into the destination country, rather than turning them back after they arrive.

The NDP charges that there is some kind of threat to our sovereignty. I will mention two points. First, U.S. pre-clearance officers in Canada would continue to be bound by our laws and Constitution. Second, the agreement contains full reciprocity. The U.S. pre-clearance officers would only be allowed to carry the same arms as Canadian border officers in the same environment. The same is true for Canadian officers in the U.S., because CBSA officers do not carry firearms in airport terminals, neither would their American counterparts.

• (1530)

Let us also consider the effect on the trade of goods and services. Currently, goods include currency and monetary instruments for those in transit to another destination via the U.S.A. Business would be delayed or avoided because of inconvenience, or time constraints should these clearance facilities not be available at major centres at least.

Various chambers of commerce and newly proposed pre-clearance cities endorse this legislation, as does John Manley, CEO of Canadian Council of Chief Executives. They all concur that the agreement would enhance business, specifically tourism and travel industries. Bill C-23 would enable us to take full advantage of an agreement to expand pre-clearance services to Canadians, informal train and cruise ship sites on the west coast will be regularized, and the door will be open for other new Canadian venues and pre-clearance of cargo.

The expansion, real and projected, of these services is a win, not only for the people who wish to travel to the United States, it is also a win for our economy. The cross-border economy relies on an

Government Orders

efficient, effective border crossing. Border delays are considered an impediment to both tourism and businesses. Pre-clearance encourages economic benefits to tourism and trade.

Our economy is attuned to cross-border accessibility. Over \$400 million worth of cross-border goods and \$50 billion in services were exported to the United States in 2015. Tourism activities in the same year included 12.5 million overnight travellers from the United States, which accounted directly for \$35.5 billion of Canada's GDP. Our government committed, during our 2015 election, to remove any hassles for Canadian business people crossing the border with goods by promoting a steadier flow of goods and business travellers.

The NDP has asked, why should we not just continue with the existing legal framework for pre-clearance? The answer is simple. Without new legislation, there can be no expansion of pre-clearance. Defeating Bill C-23 would mean no facilities at the Jean Lesage Airport in Quebec City, the Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto, Montreal's Central Station for the Rocky Mountaineer, or west coast cruise ships and ferry terminals. There would be no pre-clearance of cargo, and no possibility of Canadian pre-clearance in the U.S. This would be bad for Canadian travellers and bad for the Canadian economy.

The streamlining of border procedures by Bill C-23 is preceded by the knowledge that Canada and the United States have a history of successful pre-clearance operations since 1952. U.S. pre-clearance sites in Canada, U.S. officers, and pre-clearance perimeters are subject to Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

They precede in the pre-clearance tasks. Hence, that pre-clearance area is like an enclave in Canada with U.S. authorities, employing their U.S. authorized pre-clearance regulations, being governed by Canadian laws in the administration of those seeking pre-clearance, including people in transit. Canadian rights and freedoms are safely maintained in those pre-clearance areas and perimeters pre-assigned by the Governor in Council.

• (1535)

The act is well conceived as an instrument for pre-clearance operations, and optimally protects rights and maintains security. Pre-clearance enhances the economy by improving the flow of legitimate travel and trade, and at the same time safeguarding the integrity of our border, all under the protective arm of Canadian law and charter.

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The call by the NDP to reject this bill, based on a situation in the United States and how it affects immigration and privacy rights, is not the correct course of action. It is precisely why enacting legislation like Bill C-23, with a clear legal framework governing the actions of U.S. officers, that we are able to reduce uncertainty for Canadian travellers, protect against ebbs and flows of American policy, and defend Canadians' rights as was pointed out by the Minister of Public Safety. The alternative is for Canadians to be processed by U.S. border guards on U.S. soil with none of these legal and constitutional protections.

Therefore, I urge the NDP to recognize the benefits of expanded pre-clearance. We need to pass this bill in order to realize those benefits, and the safeguards this bill contains to ensure that Canadians' rights are well protected.

● (1540)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments on this, but I simply do not understand his position, and he incorrectly portrays the NDP position. We are not opposed to expanding pre-clearance, we are simply asking the question, when pre-clearance has functioned all this time, without granting what I would call extreme powers to the officials in the United States, why do we need those extra powers? Why do we need to say that American agents can detain Canadians? Why do we need to say that they can carry firearms? This has been working perfectly well without these provisions.

When the member says that they operate under Canadian law, that is simply not true. They do not apply Canadian law. They have no training in Canadian law. They know virtually nothing about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Simply saying that is true does not make it so.

Why do we need these new expanded powers for American officials at the border, especially at a time when gay and lesbian Canadians and Muslim Canadians are having a difficult time getting into the United States?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, being from a part of our country that relies a great deal on tourism, travel, and trade, with British Columbia abutting Washington State, I talked about our history of 60 years of pre-clearance. This has been a great exercise for both nations to be able to have that travel and trade between our citizens.

We find those U.S. guards do fall under our legal system, our charter, our Bill of Rights, and our Human Rights Act. I am sure the member's experience has been one where the facilitation of being able to cross the border with ease, having that pre-clearance, has allowed for much travel and trade, and is something that we want to expand.

We find with this expansion and the reciprocity that we have with the United States, because they have already moved on their act, we want to allow that to happen so that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is questions and comments. It is not time to make a speech, I am sorry. I am sure that the conversation is quite interesting, but we have to allow other members to ask questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague across the way. It looks like there is going to be a little co-operation in the House on this, given the fact that this legislation goes back a number of years and has crossed many different administrations.

My concern going forward is not necessarily so much in the text of the legislation, although I will have some concerns addressed in my speech in a few minutes, but the apparent disjointedness when it comes to the policies of the U.S. administration versus the new Canadian administration when it comes to marijuana legalization, when it comes to refugees and dealing with cross-border issues, and the implications of Bill C-23 being passed at this time.

We have come to this point because of confidence building measures. We are adding more destinations, more terminals, and more facilities to the list, as the member aptly points out, but at a time when the Canadian policy seems to be completely disjointed from the U.S. policy.

Can he expect, going forward, that an implementation that is based on good faith between two countries will not cause some issues?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, the member is quite right. Because of our longstanding relationship with the United States, the reciprocity that is within the act that they have passed, and what we are trying to do here, there is a clear understanding of our laws and American laws, and how pre-clearance has benefited both nations.

Canadians who go through pre-clearance are covered under our laws. U.S. law enforcement understand that at the border. This is the way we can now expand on our pre-clearance. This will bring substantial benefit to Canadians to be able to travel and trade in the United States.

● (1545)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

It is great to speak to Bill C-23, the pre-clearance act, 2016. It is nice to see that the Liberals are following through on a Conservative initiative, which was to expand pre-clearance. It really is a tribute to the very productive relationship prime minister Stephen Harper had with former president Barack Obama, when they signed the beyond the border agreement. We know Bill C-23 fulfills one of the requirements of that beyond the border agreement.

Already, Canadians have been able to benefit from pre-clearance and facilitate trade, tourism, and the movement of business people back and forth across our great border. We can add an additional number of airports and railway stations beyond the eight airports we currently have in Canada where pre-clearance already takes place.

Government Orders

Last year alone, 12 million Canadians went through pre-clearance when travelling to the United States. This is significant. Our airlines want this. More airports and train stations want to capitalize on this. We look forward to having a fulsome debate on the legislation in the House, but also having appropriate hearings at committee to ensure the bill addresses the needs of all stakeholder groups, that all the concerns regarding some of the extra powers being granted to U.S. border agents at pre-clearance stations are addressed, such as detention authority, and that other concerns around refugees and immigration are thoroughly sought out.

At this stage, the Conservatives will be supporting the bill to get it to committee. It will hear from experts and stakeholder groups, and, ultimately, to see whether amendments are required or whether the bill addresses the concerns being raised.

Currently, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax airports have already benefited for years from pre-clearance. That goes back to an agreement signed in 2001, the Agreement on Air Transport Preclearance Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States. The legislation was updated in 2012. Things continue to change and evolve, so now it is again time to expand, and it will happen in four different parts.

It is important to note that Québec City Jean Lesage International Airport, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport on the island, Montreal Central Station, and the Rocky Mountaineer will be added to the legislation, all places that can utilize the pre-clearance program. We often talk to stakeholder groups at the airports and train companies to ensure any concerns they have as to costs, because they have to bear out those costs, will be more than compensated for by increasing ticket fares and ensuring they get the extra volume of business by having pre-clearance.

There are four parts to Bill C-23. Part one is United States pre-clearance officers conducting the pre-clearance of Canadian travellers here. Part two would allow Canadian officers in the U.S. to conduct pre-clearance. Part three, which I have heard concerns about from constituents in my riding, is that American border services officers will be given exemptions from criminal liability by an amendment to the Criminal Code. There are concerns around that and how they will use those powers in the pre-clearance areas that will be dedicated to the United States in Canada. Part four would make consequential amendments to the Customs Act and repeal the existing pre-clearance act.

Canadians should remember that we have a special relationship with the United States. Currently only six countries have this pre-clearance arrangement and 15 airports around the world have U.S. border guards conducting pre-clearance in those countries. Out of those 15 airports, eight of them are in Canada.

● (1550)

We do have a special relationship. By expanding this because of the relationship between Canada and the United States, and the negotiations between former prime minister Stephen Harper and former president Barack Obama under the beyond the border initiative, we are moving forward.

I know the Minister of Public Safety has alluded to the fact that this pre-clearance may be expanded to include cargo traffic and shipments of containers and other commodities, so we can move quicker in ensuring that our trade relationship with the United States continues to expand.

As we know, \$2.4 billion of goods cross the border between Canada and the United States every day. Canada is the Americans' largest customer, buying over \$338 billion worth of goods and services in 2015. That is an amazing number and we have to protect it

For my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, Manitoba, the United States is a critical partner. It is critical from the standpoint of moving our goods and services, and of moving vehicles and transportation equipment. Winnipeg has a couple of bus companies that move their buses back and forth over the border all the time. New Flyer Industries actually builds parts of its buses in North Dakota, and parts in Winnipeg. The buses move back and forth over the border numerous times.

We have Versatile tractors and its tractors are in demand in the United States. Plus, we use a lot of minerals and natural resources, chemical products, and electronic equipment that go back and forth all the time.

We can also never forget about the food industry, the beverage industry, and the agriculture industry and how important that trade is to Manitoba and indeed all of Canada.

The pre-clearance of passengers is important to our tourism industry. Over 20,000 jobs in Manitoba are tied to the tourism industry. We are talking about a total of \$1.6 billion worth of tourism in Manitoba every year, and 6% of that comes into the Interlake region. People come up for hunting, fishing, and enjoying our beautiful lakes, like Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba. Those visitors come here because it is easy to come and it is affordable. Therefore, 6% of all tourism spending happens in Manitoba and 12% of the visitors come to the Interlake region where I live, and we are very proud of that. It is critical to our economy and to employment opportunities.

As I mentioned earlier, there are concerns about some portions of the bill, including the exemptions being provided to the United States border guards under the Criminal Code. There are some concerns over how Canadians who may enter into a pre-clearance area may have difficulty returning if they change their mind or get rejected by the U.S. border services. Are there proper provisions to deal with things like strip searching? Are there proper refugee protection claims, and for flagpoling, which happens at most border crossing, where permanent residents who need to leave the country to renew their permanent residency can often drive to the border and do what is called flagpoling, where they turn around, come back in, and reapply at the Canadian border office?

That may not be possible through pre-clearance facilities. It needs to be looked at by the committee, and we expect that to happen.

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Ultimately, the rights of law-abiding Canadians and the safety of law-abiding Canadians have to be protected under Bill C-23. The one thing we want to see studied at committee is how Bill C-23 will come together with Liberal policies and what has recently happened, such as the legalization of marijuana, which the government is intent on doing.

Matthew Harvey received a lifetime ban from the United States because he admitted to a U.S. border guard that he had smoked pot. If he can get a lifetime ban for that, how much is that going to affect other Canadians who are now going to be facing similar questions, knowing the Liberal government wants to legalize marijuana in this country?

• (1555)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am from Manitoba as well, which is a great place to travel to. There is a lot of back and forth travel between our countries.

Could the member comment on the advantages of having a quarantine area within our country under Canadian laws should there be any problem versus a quarantine area in the United States if there are problems and how its laws would apply in that case?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the bill will be critical to trade down the road. It is important to the movement of people between our two great nations, Canada and the United States. Everything we can do to facilitate that is in our best interest.

There is rhetoric about re-opening NAFTA, about which all of us should be concerned. However, this legislation is a signal to the Americans, a signal to the U.S. administration in Washington, that we want to continue to do business, we want to continue those close relationships between Canada and the United States in the best interests of both our countries.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my colleague, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, quite accurately raised the nature of the concerns. I have not heard anyone say that the bill should be defeated, as was suggested by an earlier Liberal speaker. It is a question of getting the balance right and finding ways to protect Canadians, permanent residents in Canada, who find themselves at the border.

We have heard many stories, including some from colleagues in the House, who have been turned back at the U.S. border in ways that were unreasonable and demeaning. We also know that the current approach of the new administration is to talk about extreme vetting without being able to define it. I do not think we have had anyone suggest that we would actually put every U.S. border agent through a law course to understand the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would agree with me that the bill could be more easily strengthened by ensuring every Canadian or current resident has the absolute right to leave the pre-clearance area if they choose to do so.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, one of the questions the government will have to answer when we get the bill to committee is whether the rights of permanent residents, and all Canadians for that matter, will be protected in pre-clearance.

This is where the study will be need to really drill down on the legality on the charter rights of all Canadians, whether they are citizens, landed immigrants or permanent residents, so they can have full access to all charter rights.

This is where it comes down to the exemptions under the Criminal Code being offered to U.S. border agents. We really need to study that in more detail, but overall the bill meets the need of what Canada wants, which is more pre-clearance operations across the country so our airline companies, our railways, those who do business, those who tour around, have the opportunity to leave for more destinations. This is good for Canada and it is good for business with the United States.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was really interested to hear that Rocky Mountaineer was one of the pre-clearance opportunities. That is important. Imagine getting on a fantastic touring train and then having to stop for clearance issues. This will make for a much more pleasant and seamless experience.

Does my colleague have anything to add about the importance of the tourist experience?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, Rocky Mountaineer is a Canadian icon. It is a beautiful railway. To make it easier for Americans to come here and for Canadians to go on their spur into the United States from Canada and if we can facilitate that movement of people, will be very beneficially, not just to the company but to all tourism in the region.

A lot of people make that trip on the Rocky Mountaineer right out to Vancouver rather than going on the spur down into the United States. It is a better utilization of the entire company infrastructure, and that will benefit everyone who has any relationship with Rocky Mountaineer.

• (1600)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman mentioned all the opportunities for tourism in his great riding and he talked about hunting and fishing, but he did not mention the Crown Royal plant there. I thought that was what most people went to Gimli for, but perhaps I am giving away my secret travel plans.

All that aside, it is great to see colleagues in the House today having a bit of bipartisan co-operation on a matter as significant as this. This is an issue where most common-sense folks are looking to their parliamentarians, to their elected people, and to the government to do things to make their lives easier.

As members of Parliament we all travel a lot. Some of us travel a lot more than the everyday average Canadian does, but there are lots of Canadians who travel for purposes of work or for leisure on a daily basis. I have seen statistics somewhere that at any point in time there are half a million people in airplanes around the world. It just goes to show the sheer volume and magnitude of the importance of some of these kinds of agreements.

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Of course, the arrangement between Canada and the U.S. is just astronomical. We share just under 9,000 kilometres of border with the United States. There are no other two countries in the world that share this kind of an arrangement or have this kind of opportunity. It has been mentioned by many in this House already the enormity and vastness of the trade and the like-mindedness of the cultures. Although we as Canadians like to separate ourselves and remain distinct, and we are, we have far more in common with our American cousins than we have differences, despite some of the differences that we do have.

It is important that we maintain that relationship. It is important because not only is the United States one of our closest friends and allies, it is obviously our closest neighbour and we have to continue to build that trustful relationship. The United States is our best trading and commerce partner. It is not any secret at all that north of 70% of all the goods and services that are exported from Canada go to the United States. We rely on the United States' consumer marketplace in order to keep our economy healthy and strong here at home. One of five or six jobs here in Canada actually depends on our ability to export goods and services, so this is absolutely critical and vital.

While this particular agreement does not deal specifically with cargo, this is the precursor. At a major airport, whether at the Calgary airport, here at the Ottawa airport, Toronto airport, or other major airports, when travelling to the United States, the only pre-clearance that I am aware of and have used is to pre-clear U.S. customs on Canadian soil. For Canadians watching right now and wondering what this debate is about, it is about clearing U.S. customs on Canadian soil and about Canadians clearing Canadian customs on U.S. soil at various points of departure and points of entry. That way, when we land in our respective countries, we are already there and we can just walk straight out the door of the airport or train terminal or whatever it happens to be and go about our business. That is why these agreements are so important.

The impetus for these things started long ago. Various administrations come and go in Canada and the United States. Sometimes there is a thickening of the border and sometimes there is a thinning of the border, but I can go back to the previous prime minister, Stephen Harper, and the agreement that he made with then president Barack Obama, in order to work on some of these initiatives in 2011. I would encourage members of Parliament who have not done so already to get a NEXUS card. I remember when Stockwell Day was here and he was the minister, he did a great job working with U.S. counterparts so that we had that trusted traveller program. That trusted traveller program is absolutely critical for anybody who travels on a regular basis. For people who do not have a NEXUS card, I can assure them that if they get one they will see the immense benefits. That is just one aspect, for those folks watching right now, where they do not need a passport per se. If they are going to the United States on a regular basis, they simply need to get that NEXUS card and for any land or air crossing they can just show their NEXUS card; it is as good as a passport for getting into the United States and getting back home to Canada. The process is sped up because they are trusted travellers going through security and through customs. It is absolutely fantastic. With these kinds of things, we have an opportunity to build upon the trust that we have between our two countries.

Now we come to Bill C-23. The current Liberal government has put this bill forward. The bill has obviously some good intentions in it. I have some concerns, but those are matters for debate. I applaud the government for moving ahead with this. It is important that we facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people back and forth across the borders.

• (1605)

Bill C-23 is about moving people, though, people and the stuff they have with them. This is not actually about moving massive goods and freight and cargo between the borders. This is pre-clearance of individuals and the items they have with them at that particular point in time. It is very important that folks understand what that is.

There are a couple of concerns I have with the legislation. One, as has been brought up by others, is that there seems to be, and I hope that the question that I have will be answered, a Criminal Code exemption for U.S. customs officers in Canada when it comes to basically immunity for any charges under the Criminal Code of Canada. I do not know why we would acquiesce to that request. I can only assume that request came from the U.S. administration. If it was a request that we actually had of the American administration as well, so that there would be reciprocity, so that Canada Border Services agents in the United States working at pre-clearance destinations there would have the same kinds of protection provisions, I suppose I would be okay with that. I need to know if that is actually the case or some American administrators and legislators would be making those decisions down there. I am hoping somebody on the government side can answer that question to make sure that we actually have that reciprocity.

The other concerns that I have go directly to the larger policy issues between the two administrations. We have seen a marked shift, I will call it a bromance for lack of some better terminology. The short-lived friendship between former president Barack Obama and our current Prime Minister of like-minded political ideologies is in contrast I think quite sharply now with the new administration and some of the things that we are seeing from U.S. President Donald Trump.

I am not here to debate the policies of Donald Trump, but suffice it to say that the policies of Donald Trump and the policies that are going to be put forward when it comes to immigration, when it comes to legalization of marijuana, when it comes to dealing with criminals, and so on, are going to be markedly different between the U.S. administration and the Canadian government. These are going to be issues that are going to cause friction. That friction, in most cases, manifests itself at the border. We need to make sure that we are looking after Canadian interests at that border.

I do have concerns when that fellow my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman was talking about, Mr. Harvey, admitted or confided truthfully, and we should be truthful when we are talking to a border official, that he was a marijuana user and was put on a lifetime ban from travelling.

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That seems to be a bit of a difficult conundrum. If Canada is going to pursue a policy where not only is it decriminalizing, with the legalization of marijuana, but it is going to fly completely in the face of what the U.S. administration policy is going to be there, notwithstanding several states in the United States have legalized marijuana. We are not talking about crossing into Colorado, we are talking about crossing into the United States in a pre-clearance zone in a Canadian airport.

Now imagine a Canadian citizen inside a Canadian airport inside a U.S. pre-clearance zone being basically detained by American administration authorities because he has admitted to a U.S. customs agent that he has legally, after supposedly the law is changed by the current Liberal government, which I am expecting will happen sometime in the near future, said to that U.S. customs official, “Yes, I use marijuana because it’s legal in Canada now”. That is a problem because that is illegal or could be deemed illegal or a problem for that Canadian citizen in a Canadian airport in a U.S. pre-clearance area being detained for admitting to doing something that would potentially be completely legal in Canada. This is a problem. This is very much a potential problem. I think Canadians at home watching right now need to know that, whatever legal activities that we do here in Canada that might be different from the policies in the United States, Canadians, especially those still in Canada even though they might be in a U.S. pre-clearance area, should have the full protections of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and be able to excuse themselves from that travel and not get themselves into any further predicaments.

When it comes to the issue with refugees, policies that the current federal government is going to have versus what the current administration in the United States has are markedly different. They are night and day different, from the messages that are being sent.

These kinds of issues will cause issues at the border. We are seeing already a migration of people coming across the Canadian border from the United States at non-disclosed or non-border crossing areas. That is in current violation of Canadian legislation. If we have these kinds of grievances and issues where we have differences in domestic policy that affect the thickening of our border, then we need to be sure that in Bill C-23 all the provisions that are there provide the protections that Canadians citizens are going to need.

●(1610)

I will close there. There are concerns about this piece of legislation. However, I do applaud the government for bringing it forward. I hope it will listen to folks at committee, go through the process, and amend the bill if it needs to be amended.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Saskatchewan we have no resources right now to get a NEXUS card. You talked at length about people—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the questions to the Chair because I certainly did not talk at length.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the NEXUS card and how those who are travelling should get it. It certainly would make it a lot quicker to go between Canada and the United States. However, in my province of Saskatchewan there is absolutely no place that one can get a NEXUS card, not even at the

two major airports in our province in Regina and Saskatoon. Therefore, this is an issue that we have had. In our province, we export a lot of people to warmer climates in the winter, yet we cannot get a NEXUS card in our own province without going to Edmonton, Winnipeg, or Ottawa.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, my colleague is right that it is an issue. I am from Alberta and I am lucky that at both the Edmonton and Calgary international airports we have those NEXUS offices. Bill C-23 does add a few more places for pre-clearance. Unfortunately, Saskatchewan seems to have been overlooked from that list. My colleague from Saskatchewan has some valid points. Saskatchewan has a booming and burgeoning economy. The premier there is doing a great job expanding the economy. Economic refugees are fleeing Alberta back to Saskatchewan. We hope that the export of Saskatchewanians to warmer climates is only temporary and that they will come back home soon and keep our economy in the west churning right along. It would be nice to see the current government take a look at the legislation and perhaps add something for the good folks of Saskatchewan, who deserve these benefits.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide some comment on just how beneficial this legislation is to all of Canada because it makes sense economically. Having a pre-clearance allows for tens of thousands of Canadians to travel without having to worry about going through customs or immigration services when they land at their destination. For example, the pre-clearances enable economic activity for many communities that would otherwise not have service flights going to the U.S. That is an opportunity to enhance Canada’s economy. Also, it is a great opportunity for two-way traffic given that we have millions of Canadians and Americans who go both ways.

It is a reciprocal piece of legislation. Ultimately, both Canada and the U.S. would benefit from it. Could the member provide some comment with respect to the economic benefit of this legislation?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Speaker, one of the benefits of having a Liberal federal government is that our dollar is usually worth less, which means we get more tourists coming to our country. Therefore, we will have an influx of American tourism and the tourism portion of our economy will do better.

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The hon. member, my colleague, is right. Notwithstanding my chiding, the reality is that we have certainty and predictability so that when we are travelling as a tourist we will be able to get to our destination. Obviously, this is a good thing. Certainty and predictability are also good when we are travelling for business, and when it comes to shipping goods and cargo, which is where I think the future is going with this because both administrations and both governments are currently looking at how the same kind of pre-clearance can also be implemented when it comes to the commerce and trade, and not just people and passengers. Although this bill applies specifically to people and passengers, a variant of this bill could come forward with pre-clearance for things like trade and commerce. That is where a tremendous amount of wealth and opportunity would come. Therefore, we hope for that confidence-building with respect to Bill C-23, which I am sure will be passed in this House. It is a government bill and there is a majority government. I do not think this bill will get held up anywhere. I will stress in my comments that there may be some good ideas and concerns that will come forward from people at committee, and I hope that amendments that are in the best interests of Canada would be looked at and adopted at committee.

• (1615)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to add my voice in support of this important piece of legislation.

I would first like to take a moment to remind the House that Canada and the United States have built one of the closest relationships between any two countries in the world. This partnership is essential to the well-being of all citizens. Our close trading relationship supports millions of jobs in both Canada and the U.S., and we will continue to work with the new administration.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-23 is another example of this government's firm commitment to creating jobs and promoting economic growth for Canadians.

[*English*]

As an MP representing a southwestern Ontario riding with many manufacturing and high-tech small and medium-sized businesses, I can attest to the importance of pre-clearance to keep travellers and cargo moving quickly and safely across the Canada-U.S. border. More than that, jobs for hard-working middle-class Canadians in my constituency and across the country depend on it.

The Waterloo region is only one of some 2,000 municipalities across Canada that rely on low-risk trade and travel to and from the United States to keep our communities growing. To be clear, we are talking about both the movement of goods and people, both of which are critical to our economy. In 2015, Canada exported over \$400 billion in goods and \$50 billion in services to the U.S.

Tourism is Canada's largest service export, accounting for 2% of Canada's overall GDP and employing over 600,000 Canadians. The overwhelming majority of tourists in 2016, nearly 70%, came from our neighbour to the south. Arrivals by air from the U.S. are up 17% from 2015, which is one of the many reasons that quick and effective pre-clearance is essential. Any measures that create economic and

security benefits for both countries is welcomed by all Canadians, especially small business owners, including tourism operators who rely on smart, secure borders that improve the efficient flow of people and goods.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-23 will make it possible to do just that. This bill will implement the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air transport pre-clearance between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America signed in March 2015, which provides for the pre-clearance in each country of travellers and goods bound for the other country.

[*English*]

This is about making it faster and more efficient to welcome guests to Canada and the U.S. Pre-approved passengers are cleared for entry into the United States by American border officials on Canadian soil before boarding a plane, allowing passengers to avoid long and sometimes frustrating customs lines. They can also fly directly to some airports, such as LaGuardia in New York or Reagan airport in Washington. There are even some pre-inspection sites that are already serving the rail and cruise ship businesses on Canada's west coast.

Pre-clearance is a vital border management program. It enhances border security and improves the cross-border flow of legitimate goods and travellers. It allows for border infrastructure to be used more efficiently, and it makes travelling a more pleasant experience for all. Ensuring pre-cleared, low-risk travellers and cargo move quickly and efficiently into and out of our country is crucial to sustaining and expanding jobs for middle-class Canadians.

I remind the House that our American friends already passed legislation last December, the Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act of 2016, to implement the agreement south of the border. We are taking the next necessary step to complete the joint partnership with our southern neighbours with the passage of this legislation. This bill formally reconfirms Canada's commitment to the agreement and reaffirms the unique relationship between Canada and the United States.

Central to this relationship are people-to-people connections, and so I will talk about tourism. I am thrilled to report to the House that this past year was the best the tourism sector has experienced in over a decade, and the second best year on record, with almost 20 million international tourists visiting Canada.

• (1620)

International tourist arrivals grew by 11.1% in 2016, the largest annual growth Canada has seen in 30 years. We have another big year ahead of us in 2017 as we celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation.

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[Translation]

Our government values the tourism industry, which will benefit from this bill. We are well aware that trade and tourism are critical to our economy. An open border is necessary for the success of these two areas of activity. We also recognize that tourism makes a significant contribution to the Canadian economy.

[English]

In 2015, tourism generated over \$90 billion in economic activity, directly supporting over 600,000 jobs spread from coast to coast to coast across all 338 federal ridings, and was responsible for more than \$17 billion in export revenue.

I can assure the House that this government is committed to promoting increased tourism to Canada. That is evident in our support for Destination Canada, our federal crown marketing corporation that is working hard to show the world the incredible experiences and destinations that Canada has to offer. Formerly known as the Canadian Tourism Commission, Destination Canada has a strong track record of working with private sector partners and governments at all levels to maximize the impacts of marketing campaigns.

Budget 2016 provided \$50 million over two years to Destination Canada to seize opportunities in important markets, such as the United States. Connecting America is Destination Canada's national marketing program aimed at raising awareness of Canada as the travel destination. Together with the Canadian tourism industry, Destination Canada is engaging American travellers by inviting and motivating them to see Canada. The marketing campaign targeted to U.S. cities like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Miami aims to creatively show American travellers how we are unique and different. Canada is warm and exciting with urban sophistication. Connecting America highlights the variety of unique world-class destinations and experiences that only Canada has to offer.

[Translation]

These efforts are already paying off. From January to December 2016, the number of international visitors who spent at least one night in Canada increased by 11% compared to the previous year. In the first nine months of 2016, tourism injected \$74 million into the Canadian economy, which represents an increase of 4.3% compared to the same period in 2015.

[English]

As I noted earlier, 70% of international tourists came from the United States. Overnight trips by air travellers from the U.S. increased by 17%, and overnight trips by auto travellers increased 7% compared to 2015. This is fantastic.

These statistics underscore the importance of pre-clearance, which makes it easier for pre-approved American visitors to enter our country and to choose Canada as their top international destination. This is especially true when we realize that international travel between countries represents one of the fastest growing export sectors in the world. A billion international travellers spent \$1 trillion annually outside their own borders. In 2015, international tourist arrivals grew by 4.6% to nearly 1.2 billion globally, and these tourists spent over \$1.2 trillion U.S.

Also promising is the growing interest in indigenous tourism from international visitors, which can create jobs and generate economic growth for indigenous communities across the country. We are talking about authentic indigenous experiences, and we are working with the Aboriginal Tourism Association of Canada so that we do this right.

To share Canada's natural beauty with the world, we are also investing in our system of national parks, conservation areas, and national historic sites. Together with nearby communities we are working to help grow local ecotourism industries and create jobs for middle-class Canadians. *Lonely Planet*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Condé Nast*, and more have named Canada as the place to be in their top destinations for 2017. The focus on pre-clearance will make travelling trouble-free, and will make all those who visit our country from the United States feel even more welcome.

●(1625)

I would like to remind members and assure the tourism industry, as my colleague the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has said, that U.S. border officers operating in pre-clearance sites in Canada must exercise their duties in accordance with Canadian law, in particular our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Human Rights Act.

Allow me now to turn to small and medium-sized businesses. Consider that nearly 400,000 people cross the Canada-U.S. land border every day, along with over \$2 billion in goods and services even before we factor in rail, ships, and air and it becomes quite obvious why this agreement matters to Canadians. It matters particularly to SMEs, the key drivers of Canada's economic growth, which are so crucial to Canada's long-term prosperity. I would remind the House that SMEs are the backbone of the economy, employing 90% of the private sector workforce and accounting for almost 40% of the GDP. Border delays can be a significant obstacle to economic growth. Indeed, only 12% of SMEs are exporting. We can and will do better.

We can find Canadian SMEs' expertise in both the manufacturing and service sectors in every region of Canada. My riding of Waterloo is a case in point.

Waterloo's world-class ecosystem has companies manufacturing everything from lab equipment and supplies to stainless steel tubing and carpets. It has the many incredible companies housed at Communtech and the Accelerator Centre, and numerous high-tech firms specializing in everything from drones to digital imaging and semi-conductors. That is before we even talk about the city's three outstanding post-secondary institutions: Conestoga College, Wilfrid Laurier University, and my alma mater, the University of Waterloo. As well, we have the Institute for Quantum Computing, the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, and the Waterloo Centre for Automotive Research.

Waterloo's close proximity to the Canada-U.S. border makes it just one of many cities and towns dotted along the 49th parallel where the vast majority of Canadians now live and work. All of the small and medium-sized businesses, including tourism operators, in those communities would be better off with a seamless border for pre-approved cargo and travellers.

Increased access to global markets can help innovative Canadian firms to grow and expand into new markets. Our government recognized this in budget 2016 by providing \$4 million over two years to renew the Canadian technology accelerator initiative. The program supports Canadian information and communications technologies like life sciences and clean technology firms by providing mentorship, introductions to potential clients and partners, as well as desk space in business accelerators abroad. The program has nine locations, including seven in the United States, to enable firms to more easily export their services and products. I visited the CTA in Boston and have seen first-hand the amazing support the CTAs provide to our Canadian firms expanding in the U.S. markets. Small and medium-sized businesses are major contributors to our balance of trade. In 2013, they were responsible for \$106 billion or 25% of the total value of exports. Exporting is vital to the health and verve of Canadian businesses and in particular SMEs. It is worth noting that even though only a small proportion of small firms export, of those that do, roughly 90% export to the United States.

Our government is working hard every day to make sure that businesses have the resources they need to grow and compete successfully in export markets. This includes the CanExport program. CanExport is providing \$50 million to help Canadian SMEs take advantage of global opportunities. I should point out that a majority of the CanExport projects approved to date are smaller firms that are less than 15 years old, have less than 20 employees, and less than \$2.5 million in annual revenue. CanExport has already approved over 600 projects. It is a central element to the international trade and investment strategy, which I have been working on with the Minister of International Trade.

• (1630)

To help promising small firms grow larger, budget 2016 launched the accelerated growth service to help them scale up and further their global competitiveness. Businesses can access coordinated services tailored to their needs from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada, Export Development Canada, the National Research Council's industrial research assistance program, Global Affairs Canada, the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, and the regional development agencies. High-potential firms are given more time to focus on

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their businesses, while an assigned consultant provides strategic advice on how to navigate the government supports available to them and helps them design a business development plan, including for SMEs that want to scale up through exports. We have already engaged 100 firms in the pilot year of the AGS, and we expect to assist an additional 300 firms in the second year of the program.

Only two weeks ago, the Prime Minister announced the creation of the Canada-United States council for advancement of women entrepreneurs and business leaders with the U.S. President. One of many benefits of the council would be greater support for women exporters.

Bill C-23 is another instrument that would build on these initiatives and help exporters get their goods to market more efficiently and securely. Every hour saved in delays at the border increases productivity that benefits Canadian workers and business owners alike. The passage of this bill would be an incentive and would support more Canadian firms wishing to scale up to further their global competitiveness.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister wants our country to take advantage of opportunities to grow our businesses by strengthening the long-standing friendship and enormously successful trading relationship between Canada and the United States.

[*English*]

The implementation of Bill C-23 is the next step. Pre-clearance would reduce congestion at ports of entry and eliminate uncertain, unnecessary, and costly delays at the border. Congestion, excessive paperwork, and uncertainty cost small businesses and tourism operators valuable time and money. In a just-in-time delivery world, pre-clearance would be a time and money saver for small businesses, and it would be a solution. It would also provide privileged access to the U.S. market for Canadian companies, creating new opportunities for firms to expand and export.

Pre-clearance would also make air travel more efficient, enabling 12 million Canadian passengers to avoid lengthy customs lines in the U.S. each year. This would also increase the competitiveness of Canadian airports internationally.

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Maybe most important in today's environment, pre-clearance would enable us to determine which people and cargo pose a risk to our shared security space. This would enable both countries to proactively address threats from outside the continent while continuing to ensure that legitimate trade and travel move freely at our borders. This would help to make sure that our society remains open to legitimate immigrants and refugees from around the globe. This is particularly important to me this year, as we celebrate the 35th anniversary of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are so many persuasive arguments for supporting this legislation. It would be good for small businesses and the tourism industry. It would be equally good for security, reducing Canadians' risks from external threats. Ultimately, it would be good for Canadian travellers, whose time is precious and who would no longer be needlessly tied up at the border when they have better places to be.

I am confident that Bill C-23 would help ensure that citizens of both Canada and the United States would continue to benefit from an open but secure border that protects our shared economy, shared values, and shared way of life. That would be enormously good for Canadians overall.

Making sure that Canada remains open and that Canadian goods, services, people, and knowledge can reach U.S. markets securely and swiftly will enable us to provide jobs, prosperity, and opportunities for all Canadians.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives agree with Bill C-23. There is \$2.5 billion worth of trade going back and forth across our borders every day, and we know that this would expedite the movement of persons back and forth across those borders.

The Conservative government opened some pilot projects to move in this direction. I wonder if the minister could expand on how this would impact cargo shipments and if the government is looking at more influence on the cargo side, above and beyond what we have already looked at in the pilot projects.

•(1635)

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, this legislation is about people and goods. It is important that we support our small and medium-size enterprises. Part of my mandate as Minister of Small Business and Tourism is to ensure that small businesses can grow through innovation and trade. Having better access to the U.S. market is important, but we need our goods, services, and people to get through that border in a better way. There is no better way than to be pre-cleared on Canadian soil with Canadian laws. That is why it is important that we get this legislation through the House at second reading.

We can send the bill to committee so that the committee can do its important work. As we know, the committee has the ability to do a clause-by-clause, word-by-word analysis. It has the ability to bring in witnesses to ensure that the legislation is as strong as it can be. I know that the legislation we have introduced has the right goals in mind and will really benefit small and medium-size businesses.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was listening to the minister's speech and thinking of my years at the Chamber of Commerce. For many years, the Canadian Chamber of

Commerce highlighted the decline in tourism during the 2000s. That decade was a terrible time for Canada, when we really fell in the world rankings for tourism. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce report in 2014, and the follow-up report in 2015, both said that we had to address the border and address the ease of doing business with Americans coming to Canada, yet we had no progress by the previous government.

Could the minister mention how this is going to help by having Canadian laws protecting Canadians quarantined in Canada versus being quarantined in the United States and by making it easier for Americans to come to see us on our 150th birthday?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, this year we celebrate Canada's 150th year of Confederation. We also celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In my home town of Waterloo, we are celebrating the University of Waterloo's 60th anniversary and Conestoga College's 50th anniversary. There is so much to celebrate in our great country.

Budget 2016 invested \$50 million in Destination Canada so that we could showcase all that Canada has to offer to the United States, as well as the world. We want people to visit Canada.

In regard to Bill C-23, this is about Canada and the United States and ensuring that the flow of people and goods across the border is better and more efficient. We know that with the measures we have introduced, this will be the case.

We know that every travel experience starts the minute one books a travel ticket, whatever means one might choose. Pre-clearance would allow people to start being pre-cleared at the same time they booked their travel so they could get across the border quickly and visit the best country in the world.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member who is the House leader for the current Liberal government mentioned the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bill C-23 engages fundamental questions about Canadians' rights and privacy rights, and of course, my party has expressed concerns about this.

During the election and in the House last session, the Liberals stated that they had serious concerns about Bill C-51. I am wondering if she can tell Canadians, in this 150th year, and when invoking the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, when Canadians can expect to see legislation to amend significantly, if not repeal, Bill C-51 to better protect Canadians' rights.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, part of my role and responsibility as the government House leader is to ensure that we have meaningful debate in this place and that we advance legislation so we can serve in the best interests of Canadians.

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In regard to the member's question on Bill C-51, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has responded to this question many times. We have consulted with Canadians, and we continue to do so. The conversation is always welcome. This government has undertaken unprecedented levels of consultation, because we know the work we are doing is to respond to the very real challenges Canadians are facing.

Today we are discussing Bill C-23. I know the member has concerns. I encourage the member to get this legislation through the House so it can go to committee and we can let the committee do its important work. It can study this legislation and bring in witnesses, and we can ensure that any concerns the member or the party opposite have are resolved.

• (1640)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to use this opportunity to highlight one of the towns in my riding, and that is the town of Whitecourt, which recently won an award from trivago for being the best small town in Canada to visit during Canada's 150th anniversary. However, it was left out of the Canada 150 grant process for which it had applied. I am just wondering what the member has to say to the town of Whitecourt.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, 2017 is a big year for Canada. This is a year Canadians will remember for generations to come. This government committed to celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation not only in the nation's capital, as the previous government wanted to do, but in every single community across this country in every single municipality.

I have no doubt that the member represents a great community. I myself can relate to the pride we feel when we represent our constituents. I am sure that we will all be celebrating together as we celebrate Canada's 150th birthday.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister made reference to tourism. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries around the world.

I wonder if the minister could once again reinforce how pre-clearance would be a win-win for both Canada and the U.S., because it would facilitate people going across the border in a positive and encouraging fashion.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his exceptional question. I have to commend him on the important work he does in this chamber every day the House is sitting.

When it comes to the travel experience, we all know someone who has had a frustrating experience in the customs line, whether it was waiting too long or whatever the case might be. With this legislation, people would be pre-cleared prior to crossing the border. That is why it is so important, especially this year, as we celebrate Canada's 150th birthday.

This government is not only thinking about this year but about next year and the years and generations to come, because know that we need to respond to the very real challenges Canada is facing.

This government recognizes tourism as an economic driver. I am proud to represent the tourism industry in this chamber.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know that the minister cannot tell us what she has discussed at the cabinet table. However, could she assure the House that in the agreements passed in the United States as part of the agreement the two countries would have, because there would be legislation, I am sure, appearing in the United States, if there were provisions for U.S. customs officials not to be prosecuted under the Criminal Code, Canada Border Services agents would have that same privilege in the United States?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's question, because it provides me with the opportunity to remind Canadians that pre-clearance for Canadians would take place on Canadian soil with Canadian laws. That means that U.S. border officials would have to comply with Canadian laws, which would include the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. Canadians can be assured that it will be in their best interests.

The United States has already passed its portion of this legislation, so it is important that we get this legislation to committee. U.S. officials would comply with their rules on their side.

I myself like to represent Canadians—

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, National Defence; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Ethics.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-23. I will be splitting my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

The previous speaker, the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, made a comment to my good friend and colleague from Peace River—Westlock. She did not just imply, she said that every community in his riding would receive something that would allow them to have a great Canada 150 celebration. I am just waiting breathlessly for all the small municipalities and large ones in my riding, hoping they will get the same kind of treatment.

Bill C-23 is an act respecting the pre-clearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States. Before I speak on the specifics of the bill, I would like to provide a bit of history and context about how Bill C-23 came to be.

In 2011, then president Barack Obama and then prime minister Stephen Harper announced the United States-Canada joint declaration, "Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness". This declaration spoke of a shared approach to security in which both countries would work together to address threats within, at, and away from our borders.

Government Orders

Later that year, both governments released the beyond the border action plan, which built upon the initial declaration and implemented many of the items included in the agreement.

It almost goes without saying in this House and across Canada that the United States is Canada's strongest ally and economic partner. We share the longest and most prosperous demilitarized border in the world. In fact, the only thing standing between my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and the east coast of Michigan is Lake Huron itself. While agriculture is the biggest industry in my riding, tourism is very close. It is huge. The bill would certainly help every aspect of tourism in my riding and many others.

About 300,000 people and \$1.6 billion in goods and services cross our countries' shared border every single day. Over 100 million people live in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region alone, and account for about \$6 trillion in economic activity.

The beyond the border agreement was negotiated and agreed upon in order to strengthen that special relationship between our two countries. Basically, the beyond the border agreement established a commitment between Canada and the United States to work together to enhance the security of Canadian and American citizens and support the flow of travellers, goods, and services across each other's borders.

As part of the beyond the border agreement, the previous Conservative government signed the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air transport pre-clearance, the LRMA. The LRMA updated the authorities for pre-clearance officers at border crossings to better reflect the current security environment as the previous pre-clearance laws had not been revisited in decades.

Put simply, pre-clearance allows border officers to carry out customs and immigration processes in the other country's territory. This allows border officers to use their time much more efficiently, and keep citizens of both countries safer.

This brings us to the bill. Bill C-23 is the Liberal government's attempt to implement the measures agreed upon in the LRMA. As I have said, the beyond the border agreement between the U.S. and Canada, including the LRMA, is an agreement that I support.

It is very nice to see the Liberals taking advantage of the good work done by the previous Conservative government. On that note, I think we need to really point out that there is a lot of bickering and back and forth goes on in this House, and it is actually nice sometimes to see work continue, even when there is a change of government. I want to thank the government for that.

I want to ensure that this agreement is implemented in a responsible way, though, that respects the rights and liberties of Canadian citizens, travellers, police officers, and CBSA officials. It is for that reason that I look forward to studying Bill C-23 with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

I believe that our committee will provide a strong analysis of the bill and recommend amendments where or if necessary to ensure that it adequately reflects the spirit of the 2015 LMRA.

● (1650)

I would like to briefly outline the kinds of questions that need to be answered during the committee's study of Bill C-23.

Currently, there are eight Canadian airports and three terminals designated as pre-clearance and pre-inspection sites. Every year, these Canadian pre-clearance facilities process about 12 million passengers. One of these pre-clearance facilities is the Toronto Pearson International Airport, the fourth largest point of entry into the United States in the world.

This is an airport that I have used many times. Just last fall, I was part of a delegation to Washington, and many of my counterparts from government and opposition went through there. For anybody who went through this pre-clearance, there is no doubt about it, this is a huge advantage that speeds things up at both ends of the trip.

Bill C-23 would authorize the Minister of Public Safety to designate pre-clearance areas and pre-clearance perimeters in Canada in which pre-clearance may take place. However, before the bill advances, I would like to know whether the minister has already decided whether to designate new airports, terminals, land and rail services as pre-clearance areas. This is something we do not know yet. If he has, where will these new pre-clearance sites be introduced? If the minister has already made these decisions, he should inform the House. I also hope that he has consulted with those communities to ensure a smooth transition.

On that note, we all know that the unsafe injection sites were put into communities without any consultation or input. We just hope that the same kind of thing does not happen here.

Bill C-23 would provide the United States pre-clearance officers with powers to facilitate pre-clearance in Canada. I absolutely believe that this is a function that would contribute positively to our safety and security if implemented properly.

The bill gets into the specifics of what those American pre-clearance officers can and cannot do, and I believe our committee would have a great opportunity to ensure that those specifics are outlined clearly and directly. We have to make sure that we know exactly what these pre-clearance officials would have the power to do. I look forward to hearing from relevant expert witnesses on the matter.

Furthermore, Bill C-23 would authorize Canadian police officers and officers of the CBSA to assist United States pre-clearance officers in the exercise of their powers and performance of their duties and functions. Again, I believe that this new function is a critical component of the 2015 LMRA and Bill C-23. However, the government needs to grant these new powers responsibly. We must ensure that CBSA officials and police officers are confident that they not be asked to assist in exercises that they would not otherwise perform. Since 2015, law enforcement at the border has evolved considerably, and it is the government's responsibility to make sure that CBSA officials are comfortable complying with new duties.

It is also important to remember that the LMRA is an agreement between the United States and Canada. Provisions of Bill C-23 are applicable only if the United States passes the same legislation in both its Senate and House of Representatives.

Government Orders

According to the beyond the border agreement, the American equivalent of Bill C-23 has been promised to be passed in conjunction with Bill C-23. I know that the bill has been introduced in the American legislature, but given the new American administration, where does it stand? I am not sure. If the government is going to proceed with Bill C-23, we must have assurances that its American equivalent is safe and will pass the American legislature, and not be the target of any effort to rescind or weaken it.

As I said earlier, these are just some of the questions that I hope to ask during the public safety and national security committee's study. Given that the initial agreement that led to this bill was a product of the previous government, it should be a surprise to nobody that the bill has potential.

● (1655)

I strongly believe that a thorough study of the bill by the public safety committee would ensure that it contributes positively to the safety and security of all Canadians, as well as to the economic partnership and allegiance between our great countries.

I will be glad to take questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the words the member across the way has put on the record. He emphasized how important it is that the committee have the opportunity to sit down and look through the legislation. If he listened to what the government House leader was saying earlier this afternoon, he will find that the government House leader was really encouraging that the bill go to committee.

It seems to me that this is a bill that, ultimately, the vast majority of Canadians would support. There is that special relationship between Canada and the U.S. and this is one of the ways in which we could take advantage of that special relationship, where both nations would benefit.

I wonder if my colleague from across the way would talk about the importance of the committee and, ultimately, getting it to committee given the fact that, from what I understand, the U.S. has been dealing with this legislation?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Getting this to committee and having a thorough observation of it is the right way to go. However, there is a bit of a history here. When bills come before my committee, that is the only one I can speak to, there is a real rush job. I hope that is not the case here, and that government allows the committee to take the necessary time it takes to go through it.

As I, and many others, have said in the House today, I support this bill in principle. I think it is the right thing.

A lot of Canadians, I do not believe, understand. If they have not gone through the pre-clearance they do not understand, and that is fair. However, for anybody who has, and I believe for any Canadians who actually investigate and see what this is all about, I would agree with the member that they would absolutely approve of this.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague has listened to some of the many concerns expressed by the New Democrats about this bill; one of

them being that, at present, when a Canadian seeking to enter the United States is being questioned by U.S. border authorities, if at any time the Canadian citizen decides that he or she does not want to enter the U.S. because they are not comfortable with the questioning or providing information they feel violates their privacy, they can turn around and choose not to enter the U.S.

However, under this legislation, it appears that because they will be under the control of the U.S. border authorities, Canadian citizens will not have that right to immediately break the conversation and choose not to enter the United States.

I wonder if he has any concerns, in that regard, about this bill?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, no, I do not have the same concerns. It just comes across as more of the NDP "the sky is falling" type of rhetoric. However, with regard to the comment about whether Canadians should be able to turn around and decide that rather than leave that area and go on to the U.S., if they are uncomfortable, of course, they should not have to. They should be able to stay here. I see nothing in the bill that would say otherwise. While we are on the committee and going over it, I will certainly be watching that.

● (1700)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, although not directly related to the bill, I notice it has come up in discussion, both by this member and previously in question period. I just want to talk about Canada 150 and the plans for across Canada. I heard the member talking about wanting to see something in his riding, and of course we are still waiting for some great support in ours. Hopefully, we will get some answers soon on that.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I mentioned that at the start because the minister, our good friend across the way, indicated to the member for Peace River—Westlock that every community in his riding would receive some kind of Canada 150. I certainly want that. I am sure every member here does. We will hold the minister to that. As I said, we wait with bated breath for that funding to come through.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not know if it has been mentioned in the House yet, but I think we are all very excited about the announcement today that NASA has discovered seven new planets, some of which may be inhabitable.

I know many people are thinking about this and the scientific and research opportunities. I know the Prime Minister is probably thinking about the vacation opportunities associated with that. However, this time he will have to clear it with the Ethics Commissioner first.

Speaking of vacations, we have a bill in front of us that deals with pre-clearance. It is no surprise that this is a big priority for the Prime Minister.

Government Orders

This is important legislation, one that we are pleased to support. It will help to facilitate effective travel between Canada and the United States. Obviously we know and understand the importance of the close relationship between our two countries and the impact of facilitating greater exchange, greater travel involving individuals and hopefully, as this framework develops, more effective pre-clearance procedures for goods. We see this as a positive opportunity for enhancing and strengthening that relationship.

We are pleased to join the government in supporting this bill.

I do not want to give the government too much credit, and sometimes I am in danger of doing that, because most of the heavy lifting and the important work was started under the previous government. I will talk to that in a few minutes.

To underline the importance of our relationship with the United States, and other members have mentioned this figure already, \$2.4 billion in goods and services are exchanged across the border every day. In the U.S., that relationship is particularly important. It does not necessarily get the same press or play in the American discussion perhaps as it does here, but that economic relationship is very important for the Americans. We are seeing a realization of that, and a lot of advocacy within the United States, as well as by Canada, for maintaining the strength of that relationship between our two countries. Most Canadians are already very well acquainted about the importance of that relationship and the benefits that come from it.

When there is a close relationship with another country, there is a co-operative dimension and there is also a competitive dimension. There is the co-operative dimension in so far as we all prosper together through greater exchange, but there is also a competitive dimension in that we try to attract investment to come to Canada.

A greater facilitation of that relationship through the pre-clearance measures discussed in the bill enhances that co-operation. However, in the midst of that, we need to be mindful of the things we can do which will make Canada more competitive.

The context of the bill is that the former prime minister, Stephen Harper, negotiated a beyond the border agreement with the former president, Barack Obama. This was an important agreement which was designed to facilitate that relationship, facilitate travel, and really the deepening of relationships between the two countries through different kinds of shared procedures. There are different aspects to that beyond the border agreement.

One of the important ones was this pre-clearance measure, which is a commitment as part of that agreement and is now being fulfilled through the legislation. We can very clearly see that this is the implementation of that part of the agreement signed by the previous administrations in both countries.

We are encouraged that the government is at least carrying forward and fully implementing the good work undertaken under the previous government. We really appreciated the importance of that relationship. We appreciated it when it came to the exchange of people and of goods, when it came to security co-operation, and when it came to economic exchange as well.

In addition to what has been said already in the House around the bill, the opening up of pre-clearance is done in the context of this

agreement in a reciprocal way. We are facilitating pre-clearance for Canadian travellers going to the United States, but also making it easier for travellers coming the other way.

• (1705)

Canadians will be familiar with the concept of pre-clearance. Every time one travels to the United States by air, one encounters American officials who will do a screening process in Canada rather than on the other side of the border, as happens if one is travelling to certain other countries. That makes travel much easier.

Bill C-23 would open the door through different measures to facilitate that more effectively. It would update the pre-clearance system to ensure that reciprocal exchange would continue. It would reduce the cost associated with crossing the border, and that can have economic as well as cultural benefits. In general, it will facilitate the opportunity for Canadians and Americans who want to travel and visit each other's countries. It makes Canada more competitive, as well, by making it easier for us to attract travellers coming from the United States. These are some of the many advantages associated with the bill.

Those in our party particularly understand the importance of our relationship with the United States, our trading relationship, security relationship, and other aspects to that relationship. We sometimes see that appreciation from the government. Other times and in other ways we do not see appreciation of that.

The Prime Minister was recently in Washington meeting with the new President. However, we note that for the second time, he went to Washington and did not bring along our natural resources minister. Co-operation around supporting our energy sector and finding access to export markets for it is very important. Hopefully, three times is the charm, and the government will finally take seriously its responsibility to promote our energy sector in the context of that relationship.

The failures around softwood lumber are well established. The previous Conservative government was able to get a deal on softwood lumber almost immediately after taking office, because we made it a priority. It does not seem to be a priority for the Liberal government when it comes to resolving it.

Also, I was disappointed that immediately upon the successful election of the new President, the Prime Minister said that it was no problem, that we would renegotiate NAFTA. What we needed to hear were clearer statements and an appreciation of the value of NAFTA for Canadians and a willingness to defend the trade that came with it.

The government should also look at being more supportive of the trans-Pacific partnership. It further opens up trading opportunities throughout the Asia-Pacific region and really solidifies and creates opportunities for deepening the trading relationships that already exist in North America.

Government Orders

I mentioned other forms of co-operation between our two countries. The security co-operation we see through NORAD and NATO is critical for our country's interests. I would argue that NATO is one of, if not the most important force for global peace and stability. Canada needs to make clear arguments about the importance of NATO. It also needs to be willing to make investments in NATO and our military to reflect our obligations to our security commitment. We need to have a long-term plan to get to 2%. In fact, the government's first throne speech talked about creating a leaner military.

I talked about those co-operative aspects and facilitating the partnership. There are also those aspects where we need to think in a little more competitive way. The Americans are reducing their taxes, at least there is an intention to do so, and they are not imposing a carbon tax. The presidential candidate for the Democrats, Hillary Clinton, was not proposing a carbon tax either. What the government is doing by imposing a carbon tax and looking at all kinds of ways of raising taxes and imposing new taxes on Canadians hurts our competitiveness in the context of this relationship.

We know the Canada-U.S. relationship is very important. This bill moves forward in facilitating pre-clearance, and we see that as a positive. However, there are some real gaps in what the government is doing in that relationship. We ask it to do better, to appreciate the importance of co-operation, and take some of those next steps that are needed.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear the member and the Conservative Party will be supporting the legislation.

At times, we on this side of the House recognize there are a number of actions that we have taken which have come out of some of the earlier beginnings of the Conservative government, and it is important for us to acknowledge that. Traditionally, we have demonstrated the very special relationship between Canada and the U.S., whether with respect to trade or on the issue today. The biggest winner out of all of this is Canada's middle class, and those aspiring to be a part of it. Canadians as a whole will benefit from the pre-clearance.

Could the member expand on some of the economic benefits of the pre-clearance, particularly from a tourism perspective, and how he believes the legislation will enhance that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I was briefly worried that we might go half an hour without the middle class being mentioned in the chamber.

The bill certainly has a positive impact with respect to all Canadians, however, we can divide them up. It facilitates opportunities for Canadians to travel. It responds to some degree of recognition by the government of the importance of our relationship with the United States.

As I said in my speech, we are supporting the legislation because we feel it is good legislation. However, there are other areas we need to talk about when it comes to that relationship. One is looking at expanding the mechanisms for the pre-clearance of goods and trade.

We also need to ensure we are making the investments needed in our armed forces to ensure NATO remains strong, and that there is confidence that everybody is investing the necessary amounts with respect to that. Those are some of the additional things.

Yes absolutely, I am pleased to support the bill.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud of our position in the NDP, which stands in firm opposition to Bill C-23. It is not only a reflection of our party principles, we are also echoing the major concerns Canadians are bringing forward with respect to racial profiling and the profiling of trans Canadians, and everyone who is concerned about privacy rights.

Therefore, my question is not only for the Conservatives but it is for the Liberals as well. Given what is in Bill C-23, how can we, in good conscience, accede such power to the Americans rather than stand up for privacy and Canadian human rights?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, perhaps the member has read different legislation than the one I have been looking at. Let us be clear as to what pre-clearance is. It allows for people travelling to the United States to be cleared on the Canadian side of the border before they travel as opposed to the alternative, which is to travel to the United States and be cleared there.

For example, if we were travelling to the United States, we would have to go through a clearance process administered by American authorities. Perhaps the member has some concerns about the way in which that process happens, and she is welcome to raise that. However, I am not sure how that fits into the question of pre-clearance versus the alternative, which is still clearance. It is just a matter of where that happens and how arduous that process is.

• (1715)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, following along those lines, I would like to ask my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan this. As he knows, when we travel to any country, as we enter that country, we are subject to its clearance methods, which could be in violation of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In this case, because pre-clearance would be done on Canadian soil, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms applies. Does he not think that is preferable?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my colleague makes a good point with respect to the application of our constitutional framework in Canada. However, as much as it is fair to talk about some of the issues that are going on in the United States, it is a little irresponsible to go too far in trying to suggest things about the United States that would compare it to other extreme things going on in the world.

At the end of the day, the United States has a robust judiciary, a system of rule of law, and strong institutions that are there even to insulate against decisions of an executive, with which members here may or may not agree.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Surrey Centre.

Government Orders

I am happy to speak about pre-clearance, and what it means for my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul. Every time I am at home, I see more trucks on Winnipeg's roads heading to CentrePort. These are signs of growth, trade, jobs, and these jobs are, many of them, in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul.

My good friend and fellow Ukrainian Canadian, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, has stressed how important it is to make our border thinner. The Prime Minister has worked with our American neighbours to bring our two countries closer together.

During her recent meetings in Washington, the foreign affairs minister stressed that making trade easier with Canada was a priority, including extending pre-clearance for product shipments. She is quoted in *The Canadian Press* as saying:

Our conversations focused on ways to make that border thinner. We talked about pre-clearance for cargo as an area that we might want to be working on, going forward.

Right now, Canada hosts 15 international pre-clearance stations at its airports. A Canadian government spokesman said:

Any U.S. pre-clearance activities in Canada have to be carried out in a manner consistent with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

U.S.-Canada trade is very significant for Canada. U.S. goods and services trade with Canada totalled an estimated \$662.7 billion in 2015 and exports were \$337.3 billion, with imports at \$325.4 billion. U.S. goods and services have a trade surplus with Canada of only \$11.9 billion in 2015.

Looking at Manitoba trade exports, who was our number one partner? The United States, of course, with \$16.291 billion exported to the United States while we import \$9.527 billion worth of products.

Therefore, it makes good sense for Kildonan—St. Paul, for Manitoba, and for all of Canada to look at ways to make our relationship with the United States better.

I am very proud to say that our current Prime Minister had a very successful mission to Washington where he was able to make renewed friends with the new President, and in fact, talked about a number of issues including how we can enhance trade between our two countries, an issue that the President and our Prime Minister both recognized as having benefits for both countries.

Today, I want to focus on what more open borders will mean for businesses in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul. Winnipeg's James Richardson Airport has had U.S. pre-clearance for many years, and in the last decade the increase in cargo pre-clearance has made a huge difference for Manitobans.

Also in my riding is Palliser Furniture, which produces outstanding furniture, and the owners and many of the workers at Palliser live and work in my riding. This is a growing company that has grown through Canada's policy of free and open trade. As our government moves to ratify the Canada-Europe and Canada-Ukraine free trade deals, it is possible that in the future I will be speaking about Palliser's location in Kiev and Warsaw.

In Winnipeg, we built CentrePort, North America's largest inland port. CentrePort is a hub that connects our local businesses with their partners all over the world through air, road, and train systems.

● (1720)

Our open trade policy means that CentrePort has been rapidly growing. At 20,000 acres, there is a lot of room for more investment. In the last year, CentrePort has seen several new developments, including the announcement of a new \$25 million grain handling facility, and a partnership with Mexican business and government leaders to bring investments to Manitoba.

All of this growth has meant that CentrePort has had to expand its existing infrastructure, water, telecommunications, and natural gas, so there can be new opportunities for businesses and to create new jobs for all of the new workers.

In fact, new needs of CentrePort are roads and infrastructure. Particularly important for my riding is the Chief Peguis Trail, and I encourage the Conservative government of Manitoba to come to the table, to take our generous offer of building infrastructure in Manitoba to create jobs and new investments in Manitoba, like other western provinces where more infrastructure is needed.

Trading hubs like CentrePort are important because they keep our connections strong and our economy moving. In Manitoba, almost 40% of our economic activity is the result of trade with American partners. As a manufacturing hub, we export over \$16 billion worth of goods every year. In fact, Manitobans trade almost as much with international partners as they do with Canada's other provinces. This has made Manitoba a centre for trade, which connects our world-class trade infrastructure with our world-class manufacturing.

One of its most interconnected imports is busing. In fact, many of us and our constituents ride those buses every day, with components that are built in Winnipeg. For example, New Flyer Industries, a highly innovative and dominant player in transit bus and motor coach manufacturing, employing over 4,800 people, produces buses and components for both Canadian and American jurisdictions. Buses and parts are built in Winnipeg and Minnesota, and provide stable, middle class manufacturing jobs on both sides of the border.

Government Orders

Manitoba is also famous for its aerospace sector. Winnipeg's connection to aerospace is so famous that its hockey team is called the Winnipeg Jets. It has the largest aerospace sector in western Canada and the third largest in the country, with companies like Boeing, StandardAero, and Magellan, with major plants in Winnipeg. These are high quality, middle class jobs. Aerospace workers are expert manufacturers, and build some of the world's most complicated machines. Annually, Manitoba imports over \$660 million in jets and turbines, and exports over \$550 million in aircraft parts, which is over \$1 billion in trade.

The aerospace industry nears \$2 billion in revenue each year, and directly employs over 5,000 Manitobans. Beyond the numbers, Manitoba's aerospace industry means a lot for Canadian innovation. In Winnipeg, General Electric and StandardAero, both U.S.-based companies, took advantage of Manitoba's unique weather and opened a \$75 million cold weather testing facility. It also employs some of the brightest engineers.

Winnipeg is also home to the Centre for Aerospace Technology & Training. Once again, thanks to international partnerships with Red River College, StandardAero, and the federal and provincial governments, the Centre for Aerospace Technology & Training prepares Canada's middle class for the future.

We all know that manufacturing has been changing in a big way. Students use the latest manufacturing technologies, like 3D printing, to prepare for long-term, stable manufacturing jobs. For manufacturers in my province, improved pre-clearance means fewer lineups, a more efficient use of time as they travel across the border, and fewer traffic holdups. It is making it easier for people and cargo to cross the border.

● (1725)

As I have already said how important open borders are in my province, I am proud that pre-clearance will create more jobs for all Canadians.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that is kind of interesting about Bill C-23, as we move forward and talk about it today in the House, is the fact that we already have pre-signed agreements that were put in place with the United States that are not being lived up to.

This is a question I often get not only from constituents of mine but also in the United States when I go to Washington and meet with others in Congress and senators. They raise the fact that they have issues with the NEXUS fast track and a series of different programs.

Regarding the current agreements we have, and the fact that they were later altered unilaterally, we still do not have answers to some of those programs, such as NEXUS and permanent residents, now that they were taken out of the program as well other programs, like fast track, and now that the Trump administration is coming in.

Why would we enter into new agreements at a time when we cannot keep the existing agreements with the principles of why we signed them to begin with?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, it illustrates the fact that it is absolutely essential that we maintain strong links with our trading partners. In doing that, there have been numerous ministers taking trips across the border to meet with their counterparts,

including, and most formally, our Prime Minister. He made the trip to Washington and began a good relationship with the Trump administration and with the President himself.

It is important that we continue the dialogue. We are not going to enhance trade or our relationship by taking a closed, inward look. It is important for Canada that we maintain an outward looking view, and that we continue to reach out to our neighbours to the south.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is related to the position that is being taken by the NDP.

In the event that we are not meeting the U.S. requirements for pre-clearance in Canada, and we are not going to expand but in fact close it down, what does the member think about the millions of Canadians who will then be inconvenienced when they go across the border to the United States?

They will not be able to go to some of the airports in the United States that do not have clearance, and basically, will wait hours to do what they could have done in Canada in a very short amount of time.

● (1730)

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, part of the issue here is that sometimes we play politics, which leads to misunderstandings and raises fears that are unjustified.

We are looking at a system that is going to enhance the ability of people to cross the border in a way that is going to respect our Constitution, our laws, and in a way that will allow people to go into the United States more efficiently. This will enhance tourism, create small businesses, and build the bridges stronger than they are even now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and the question that followed.

The Liberals seem to have fallen back on the argument that it is okay because it is already happening. They are accusing the NDP of wanting to close the borders. Seems like the politics of fear to me.

Here is the truth. If pre-clearance is already happening, if it is working well, if the goal is simply to expand the pre-clearance process to other airports, train stations, and ports, and if the government wants reciprocity, which would mean posting Canadian officers in the United States, then why give American officers so many additional powers?

For example, they will be allowed to do strip searches without a Canadian officer present, carry firearms, and interrogate and detain Canadians and permanent residents who choose to leave the pre-clearance area.

If the system is already working well, can my colleague explain why additional powers should be granted?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Conservative government of past for the good work that it did which we are building on. These kinds of relationships take a lot of years, a lot of meetings, and a lot of hard work. A system was established that is working well. There is no indication that we have actually seen a negative turn. There is speculation that the present government in the U.S. has an agenda very different from ours, but when it comes to actual facts, our Prime Minister had a very positive and productive meeting with the President of the United States. In fact, deals were made and a commitment to work together was made.

This is a positive step. It is one that we should be celebrating. Until we see something different, we should all celebrate the expansion of pre-clearance for both parties.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey Centre. The member will have approximately seven minutes, but he will be able to continue his discussion once Bill C-23 comes back up for discussion.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-23.

During these debates, we have heard much about the tremendous benefits of pre-clearance, both in terms of the operations that are currently in place, as well as future opportunities that will be available once the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air transport pre-clearance is ratified on both sides of the border.

It is clear that pre-clearance works. As we have heard, air pre-clearance is a huge success story. Since its early beginnings at Toronto Pearson International Airport over half a century ago, pre-clearance has made clearing customs easier for millions of air passengers heading from Canada to the U.S. It has opened new markets for business and tourism by making it possible for airlines to fly directly to smaller U.S. airports that do not have their own customs operations on site. This also decreases the costs for Canadian passengers who fly to those cheaper airports.

It has helped to increase in-transit traffic, helping to make Canadian airports and carriers more competitive. It has added an important layer of security to cross-border traffic as threats are dealt with at the point of origin rather than being allowed to transit. In fact, I personally use the pre-clearance areas when travelling to the U.S., and find it easier and more efficient than going through a customs facility in the United States.

As we have heard, the agreement in principle reached in March 2016 will allow for the expansion of pre-clearance operations into other modes of transportation. Furthermore, it will allow for expansion of airport pre-clearance to new locations in Toronto and Quebec City, and it will enable pre-clearance to be conducted at rail locations at Montreal's central station and of course Vancouver's own Rocky Mountaineer.

This expansion is a long time coming. Industry and government stakeholders on both sides of the border have pushed for these changes for many years because they know the enormous economic and security potential of pre-clearance. Understandably, those outside the air transportation sector want to be able to reap the same benefits in their marine, rail, and land transport sectors. In fact,

we already have concrete numbers that illustrate the benefits of pre-clearance in other transportation modes, including through two truck cargo pilot projects as well as a number of informal pre-inspection sites currently operating along the west coast.

We look forward to opportunities under this new agreement to streamline our border crossings to ensure that we maintain strong economic growth and trade with our great friends and neighbours in the United States. This includes exploring the terms and conditions necessary for cargo pre-clearance, and identifying opportunities to pilot this approach.

As for pre-inspection on the west coast, it is currently conducted by U.S. pre-clearance officers at five sites in British Columbia: first and foremost, Port Metro Vancouver, Prince Rupert ferry terminal, Vancouver's central rail station, Sidney ferry terminal, and Victoria ferry terminal. Port Metro Vancouver is a great example of the economic importance of efficient and effective border management. The cruise ship industry produces a huge economic benefit to Canada with Port Metro Vancouver contributing some \$420 million a year to the economy and employing some 4,500 people locally.

Port Metro Vancouver is the main hub for cruise ships heading to Alaska for a number of reasons, including being the only port to offer inside passage along the west coast of B.C. to Alaska. During high season, U.S. customs and border protection officers work out of the port, processing passengers as they board their cruise ships to Alaska. Both nations benefit from these operations. Canada remains a key port for these cruise ships which bring hundreds of thousands of passengers to Vancouver every year. The U.S. can secure its borders and allow smaller Alaskan communities with no post-clearance services to remain part of these cruise ship itineraries. This is a win-win arrangement and one that will benefit from regularized pre-clearance operations.

Rail transport is another important mode that will benefit from expanded pre-clearance. For example, Vancouver's central rail station is the hub for regular Canada-U.S. rail service provided by U.S. Amtrak. The Amtrak service runs two trains per day with passengers undergoing primary immigration inspection in Vancouver.

• (1735)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Surrey Centre can resume his speech when Bill C-23 comes before the House again. He will have five minutes and 30 seconds left for his speech.

It being 5:38 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from November 29, 2016, consideration of the motion that Bill S-217, an act to amend the Criminal Code (detention in custody), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill S-217. As we have heard, this bill, which proposes changes to certain bail provisions under the Criminal Code, was introduced in reaction to the senseless shooting of a police officer in St. Albert, Alberta.

Words fail to express the sadness felt by all Canadians when a police officer is killed in the line of duty.

[Translation]

Constable David Wynn's family suffered an unimaginable loss, and I want to offer my sincere condolences to Shelly MacInnis-Wynn, her three boys, and the entire RCMP community.

As a former member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I have studied the many challenges facing first responders in the line of duty. We must ensure that all Canadians are protected by our criminal justice system.

• (1740)

[English]

While I support the bill's laudable objectives, I am unable to support Bill S-217, as I believe it would interfere with the proper functioning of our bail system by eroding at the independence of the crown and adding further delays in our courts.

Constable David Wynn tragically died and Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond was seriously injured after being shot by Shawn Rehn. Rehn, who killed himself after the shooting, had a lengthy criminal record, including crimes of violence and failure to comply with court orders. Months before the shooting, Rehn was arrested. He was not, however, detained in custody at that time. There was no crown counsel present at the bail hearing and the court was not made aware of Rehn's criminal record.

Clearly, it is important that those who preside over bail hearings have all of the relevant information before determining who should be detained in custody prior to trial.

[Translation]

As we know, in response to Constable Wynn's murder, the Alberta government did a comprehensive review of the entire bail process in that province.

[English]

Last April, the Alberta government released a report entitled "Alberta Bail Review: Endorsing a Call for Change". This report, produced after consultation with key stakeholders, makes over 30 recommendations. The recommendations range from operational changes to resource allocation. Notably, the Alberta report does not call for the legislative changes proposed in Bill S-217. The report

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recognizes the complexity of both the problem and the solutions and the importance of engagement with stakeholders in the criminal justice system.

Here in this House members will recall that the Prime Minister has asked the Minister of Justice to conduct a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system, including the bail system. Specifically, the minister has been asked to strengthen bail conditions in cases of domestic assault, with the goal of keeping victims and children safe. The minister has been working diligently on these important priorities for over a year now and is continuing to work on their implementation, in collaboration with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners and criminal justice stakeholders.

[Translation]

As part of this strategy, the minister has completed a series of round tables in nine provinces and territories where reforming bail procedures is a subject of concern for many stakeholders. While public safety of course remains a top priority, major concerns have also been raised about the efficiency of our courts.

[English]

I understand that similar concerns have been raised before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which is also studying delays, and I look forward to reading the final report.

Let me turn to the bill itself. Bill S-217 proposes two changes to the Criminal Code bail regime.

First, under clause 1, it proposes to modify the grounds for detention under subsection 515(10) of the code by adding specific consideration of the accused's record to the third ground for detention. Under this ground, detention is justified when it is necessary to maintain confidence in the administration of justice. It is not clear why this consideration would be specified under the third ground, which provides a discrete basis for denying bail. The accused's record is already considered under each ground for detention and at multiple junctures in the bail process, both under the primary and secondary grounds. This amendment would therefore cause duplication and unnecessary confusion in the already established bail provisions, and it would benefit no one.

Second, clause 2 of Bill S-217, the one that has garnered the most attention, proposes an amendment that would mandate prosecutors to lead specific evidence, evidence of the accused's personal record, outstanding charges and breaches. Prosecutors would be required to lead evidence to "prove the fact" of a prior record, prior offences against the administration of justice, or outstanding charges.

This a higher evidentiary burden than is currently required. In other words, the bill could make it more difficult to detain an accused person in custody rather than under the existing provisions of the Criminal Code.

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For instance, formalizing the evidentiary process could result in prosecutors having to call additional witnesses or lead additional affidavit evidence at every bail hearing. We know that the bail system simply cannot operate effectively in this way.

The bill process strives for accuracy in decision-making, but because of the volume of cases currently before the courts, the process also places a premium on efficiency, expediency, and flexible rules of evidence.

We must trust that crown attorneys will call the relevant evidence that they determine is needed and relevant and in the manner that they choose. The Criminal Code does not dictate what evidence a crown attorney should call. To do so raises the issue of crown discretion and independence, an essential feature and constitutional principle within our criminal justice system. Mandating crown attorneys to lead specific evidence would arguably encroach on this discretion. They must act independently in carrying out their responsibilities as officers of the court, as quasi-judicial officers of the court.

Of equal concern is the potential for these amendments to make it harder for prosecutors to quickly and efficiently prove past criminal activity. It is unclear how clause 2 would be interpreted. It could result in the presiding justice at a bail hearing scrutinizing the prosecutor's decision as to whether to introduce certain evidence and how it is introduced. This could potentially compromise trial fairness and the effectiveness of the bail hearing. At the very least, an amendment of this nature would require consultation and engagement with prosecutors who exercise their discretion ethically and professionally every day in bail courts across this country and who benefit from the current flexibility in the rules of evidence to ensure the best case is presented.

It is essential that our police and the public are kept safe from accused persons who belong in custody prior to trial. This requires that the courts, police, and crown attorneys have the relevant information about the accused, the victim, and the circumstances of the offence in a timely way. This cannot however, be accomplished with piecemeal legislation such as the one currently before the House. It requires a comprehensive strategy for bail reform and consultation with stakeholders who work with these provisions every day.

To summarize, the impact on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system has to be considered when any amendment to the Criminal Code is proposed.

The Supreme Court of Canada has emphasized the importance of bail hearings being held expeditiously and the rights of individuals to reasonable bail. This flexibility is an important factor to keep in mind when considering the amendments proposed in the bill. It allows the prosecutor in a bail hearing to lead evidence that is credible and trustworthy, but that might not otherwise be admissible according to the usual rules of evidence at trial. This includes evidence of prior criminal activity, outstanding charges, and administration of justice offences.

The Supreme Court has also repeatedly emphasized the independence of prosecutorial discretion, itself a fundamental principle under our Constitution. By removing that discretion of

the crown to determine which evidence it will lead at the bail hearing, the bill arguably undermines that principle.

As a former federal prosecutor, I know that my fellow prosecutors benefit from the flexibility in the rules of evidence at bail hearings to ensure that the correct evidence is put before the justice quickly and efficiently. Victims of crime also benefit from the timely disposition of cases.

While I cannot support the bill, I do want to thank the sponsors of it for all of the work that they have done. Reform of the criminal justice system benefits from the input and involvement of as many Canadians as possible.

• (1745)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):
Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (detention in custody). It has also become known as Wynn's law.

I would remind the House that this bill was named in honour of Constable David Wynn, who was shot and killed in the line of duty in Alberta, another senseless loss of a police officer that in this specific case was absolutely preventable.

I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for introducing the bill, and for what he has contributed to the debate.

I personally attended the funeral of Constable Wynn. He died in the line of duty while I was a serving member of the Medicine Hat Police Service. I remember that we in the policing community, along with most of this nation, were shocked and outraged by, yet again, another failure of our justice system to protect our communities.

The amendments proposed in Bill S-217, as passed in the Senate, are intended to mitigate similar situations from happening in the future. The man Constable Wynn was attempting to arrest was out on bail, despite having over 30 outstanding charges before the courts, and a lengthy criminal record of over 50 convictions.

What is significant in this case, however, is that none of these previous convictions and outstanding charges had been mentioned during his latest bail hearing, allowing him to be released from custody yet again.

Bill S-217 amends section 515 of the Criminal Code to expand the grounds for detention and custody to include the fact that the accused has previously been convicted of criminal offences or is awaiting trial on other charges.

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It also amends section 518 of the Criminal Code to require the crown to lead evidence of the accused's criminal record and outstanding charges at a bail hearing. Currently, across most jurisdictions in Canada, criminal records are routinely introduced at bail hearings. At issue, however, is the fact that the introduction of these records is not mandated or required by law. By simply changing the wording of section 518 of the Criminal Code from may to shall, Bill S-217 ensures that justices will have the information they need to make an informed decision on bail hearings.

During previous debate on Bill S-217, and heard earlier in my colleague's previous comments, the Liberal government has expressed some concerns. In its view, ensuring that decision-makers in the bail process had relevant information is not a simple task.

The Liberals say it is difficult because it requires up-to-date information management systems and fully trained prosecutors, police, and justices. They were concerned that the bill would create policy and legal implications that could result in a bail system that would not function properly for anyone. They also believe that the proposed changes would ultimately impart delay and confusion, and would likely have unintended legal and operational consequences for the bail process.

In an effort to alleviate and address these concerns, I rely on my 35 years of recent policing experience in order to bring operational real life knowledge to this debate.

It is important for members of the House and the Canadian public to understand the basics about the release of an accused person from custody pending trial, commonly known as bail. The present philosophy of the release provisions in the Criminal Code is that accused persons should not be held in custody except in unusual circumstances.

In simple terms, the release pending trial of an accused person is generally affected in two separate and distinct ways. First, depending on the offence and circumstances, an accused may be released prior to his appearance in court by the police, unless police officers have yet to establish the identity of the person, need to secure or preserve evidence of or relating to the offence, or they must prevent the continuation or repetition of that offence or the commission of another offence, or they believe on reasonable grounds that the person being released from custody will fail to attend court.

If the officer is content that the above have been satisfied, depending on the seriousness of the offences committed, the officer has various release avenues available to compel the accused's attendance in court.

On the other hand, there are basically four instances where police officers cannot release an accused, and it would be wrong to suggest they do so using their own release powers. These include where an officer believes it is necessary in the public interest not to release, and where the accused does not fall into certain categories of offences such as serious criminal offences punishable by imprisonment for more than five years. The other two circumstances relate to warrants without a release endorsement and warrants for serious offences committed in other provinces.

● (1750)

In these circumstances, an accused may be released as a result of a judicial interim release having been held by a justice or a judge as defined in the Criminal Code. The term judicial interim release simply means that a justice gives judicial consideration based on the facts and law to allowing the right of the accused not to be detained in custody prior to his trial. This is one of the most important areas where a justice must exercise judicial discretion. In all matters involving judicial discretion, a judge is independent of the crown and the defence.

For most accused persons held in custody by the police, this is their first appearance before a justice and it is the key stage in determining their status respecting release or detention. The justice will consider all facts presented by the crown and the defence and render a decision. During a bail hearing the justice currently may take into consideration any other charges that the accused is already facing.

Some of the considerations that are relevant for a justice in determining the issues of release have to do with the accused's record. The fact that the accused has a record does not necessarily in itself order detention. It is only relevant if it relates to the charge before the justice. Other issues include whatever charges the accused might be facing. Does the individual have previous offences for failing to appear or violating bail release conditions? Is the individual already detained in custody in respect of another matter? What is the gravity and nature and danger of the charges the individual is currently facing?

There are two basic grounds for a justice to consider for detention. The primary ground is: is it necessary to ensure the accused's attendance in court? It is only after the justice rules on the primary ground that he may go on to consider secondary grounds. The secondary grounds are: is it necessary in the public interest or for the protection and safety of the public, which includes the probability that the accused will commit another offence or interfere with the investigation?

Public interest involves many considerations, not the least of which is the public image of the criminal justice system; the apprehension and conviction of criminals; the attempts at deterrence of crime; and, ultimately, the protection of Canadians who are socially conscious and law-abiding. This cannot be overemphasized too strongly. Much has been written about the attitude of citizens concerning accused persons being released and subsequently arrested on allegations of committing further offences.

It is important to note that as a matter of good practice, the police agency will always provide the justice with all relevant information, as indicated above, which should be considered at a bail hearing. In my experience, these records are readily available to police through various national, provincial, and local information management systems. Apparently unknown by the Liberal government, these systems that the justice system and law enforcement agencies rely upon are current and up-to-date, as lives depend on them. Anything otherwise would be irresponsible.

Private Members' Business

Further, the suggestion that changing the wording as proposed in Bill S-217 is not a simple task as it would require fully trained prosecutors, police, and justices diminishes the already proven proficiencies with which these professionals currently perform these tasks now on a daily basis.

I am of the belief that Bill S-217 would strengthen the criminal justice system and protect the lives of law enforcement and Canadians through the requirement of ensuring justices have all relevant accused record information to make informed decisions on public safety. I fully support this excellent bill and encourage all members of the House to do the same.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill S-217, which was introduced by a senator and is now being debated here in the House, as we continue our study and consider passing this bill to amend the Criminal Code. We became quite accustomed to changes to the Criminal Code under the previous government. I want to thank my NDP colleagues who worked so hard examining this issue.

First of all, I want to offer my condolences, as most members have done, to Mr. Wynn's family. Constable Wynn was regrettably killed by someone who had been released on bail while awaiting trial. It is in this context that we are debating Bill S-217; we are trying to correct the flaw that made it possible for the accused in question, who had committed very serious crimes, to be released pending trial, at which point he sadly committed the acts we are all well aware of now. I therefore want to offer my condolences to the family.

I would also like to say that the NDP will be supporting Bill S-217 at second reading so that it is studied in committee. It is our role as legislators to thoroughly study issues, not just in the House when we give our speeches, but mainly in committees, where we study proposed legislation in depth.

In this case, we will focus mainly on the effects of this bill on our judicial system. It is important that this be studied by a committee; as such, we will support this bill at second reading so we can consider the wealth of evidence related to the issue.

Many people are concerned about the proposed legislation. Naturally, police forces are very concerned and expressed their concerns when the bill was before the Senate. The legal community is also very concerned by this issue because the bill would add a step prior to the release of an accused person awaiting trial.

Many people are concerned about this, which is why it is important to have an in-depth study in committee to determine the repercussions of this proposal. For example, some experts say that this could slow down the process. We certainly do not want that, especially when the justice system is already so slow when it comes to hearing crown prosecutors and defendants. There is already a backlog in processing court cases across Canada. It is important to address this issue because it could affect the length of proceedings.

This could have repercussions on the work of police, who are extremely important people in our communities. Crown attorneys could also be affected. I am therefore in favour of Bill S-217 and I think we will have the opportunity to look at its impact.

There are other issues that I wanted to raise and that could help inform the committee members. It will be important to ask the experts to address the issue of presumption of innocence, which is the foundation of our current system.

• (1800)

That is why accused persons are released in many cases. Of course, they will appear before a judge at some point, and that is when the crown and the defendant will present their arguments. In the end, it is up to the judge to determine whether the person is guilty or not.

It is important to consider the fact that, in our system, everyone is presumed innocent until a judge determines otherwise. This issue must be discussed because there is no need to keep people in custody until they have been found guilty of a crime. Since there are hundreds of crimes set out in the Criminal Code, it would not make any sense to keep everyone who has been accused of a crime in custody awaiting trial.

There are mechanisms in place to allow accused persons to go free because not all of them are a danger to the public. As I said, there are hundreds of crimes. There are economic crimes, fraud. The judge analyzes each situation and makes a decision on a case-by-case basis. Allowing accused persons to go free while they await trial does not always present a danger to the public.

We need to look closely at this situation, so as not to put too much of a burden on our justice system and our prisons. Keeping more accused persons in custody for longer periods will not be without consequences. In this debate, it is important to keep in mind that every accused person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, we need to give judges the discretion to decide whether the accused constitutes a danger to the public and the community.

In the case before us, the situation is profoundly sad, because the individual released had been charged with several serious crimes and then went on to reoffend by committing an even more serious crime.

Mechanisms exist that give judges the discretion to say that an accused person constitutes a danger to society and must remain in custody awaiting trial. Judges should have that discretion.

If our policies and our laws are too restrictive, we will be removing the judges' discretion to make that decision. Judges are in the best position, because they are the ones who speak directly to the accused and take all the facts presented to them into account.

There certainly is a need for an ideal mechanism, as laid out in Bill S-217, to take into account the accused's criminal record, including previous convictions and failures to appear in court. That can help the judge determine whether the accused is at risk of failing to appear again. If the accused does not appear in court when required to do so, an arrest warrant must be issued. There are consequences for that.

Private Members' Business

As we debate this bill, it is extremely important to keep in mind that judges must have as much discretion as possible to make informed decisions based on the facts of a given case. They are the judges. There is a reason we call them judges. They are the ones who judge whether accused individuals should be detained in custody or whether they can be released while awaiting trial.

In this debate, I want all of us to think about giving judges as much discretion as possible because they, not we in the House of Commons, are in the best position to evaluate each case based on the facts before them and to decide whether to release the accused or detain them in custody.

My time is up, but I hope to see the next installment of this debate in committee very soon.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak in support of Bill S-217, also known as Wynn's law. I want to congratulate and commend all of the hard work of my colleague the member for St. Albert—Edmonton in advancing this bill, as well as the comprehensive case that the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner made earlier based on his long experience as the chief of city police. Our advocacy speaks volumes to both the family of Constable Wynn and the thousands of other families who have lost loved ones to previously convicted criminals.

For most Canadians, Saturday, January 17, 2015, was just a normal day. We were doing errands, visiting with family and friends, or going to work, but for the Wynn family, it was a day that changed their lives forever. It was the day Constable David Wynn was stolen from them. As we all know by now, in the early morning hours that day, Constable David Wynn and Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond were patrolling in St. Albert, Alberta, checking licence plates outside of a casino. After finding one flagged as connected to an outstanding arrest warrant, they went into the casino to arrest Shawn Rehn.

A career criminal with a dangerous past, Rehn had several warrants out for his arrest, one having only been issued a few days earlier. He had at least 100 offences dating back to 1994 and many of those charges included confrontations with police officers. Since 2010, Rehn had been sentenced to a total of 10 years in jail for offences that varied from possession of a prohibited firearm, to breaking and entering, and theft, yet he was not serving time in prison. He was walking the streets. He turned from career criminal to murderer in four seconds, all because of a loophole, a loophole that we, as legislators, can fix before this happens again.

We can and we must do more than express sadness, as our Liberal colleagues said earlier. We must act so we can stop this from happening again, because there is no question that Constable Wynn's murder was preventable. Rehn should never have been given bail, but in September 2014, after an arrest on several charges, which included possession of a prohibited weapon and an outstanding arrest warrant for failing to appear in court, he had been released on \$4,500 bail.

During the hearing, there was no mention, no consideration of Rehn's lengthy criminal past, no mention of how, in 2009, Rehn attacked an ex-girlfriend. He choked her, ripped out her hair, and

broke her collar bone. He forced that girlfriend and her infant daughter to sleep in a room with him while he held a loaded gun, because he was feeling paranoid. Was this recounted during his bail hearing? No. Neither was the fact that he was subject to a lifetime firearms ban, that he posed a flight risk, and that he had demonstrated over and over again complete and utter disregard for previous court orders.

This bill makes sense. It seeks to amend section 518 of the Criminal Code, which says that a prosecutor "may" lead evidence of a bail applicant's criminal history. This bill would change the word "may" to "shall", making it mandatory for prosecutors to lead with any evidence relevant to accused criminals' pasts.

The bill would further amend the same section to include previous convictions, outstanding charges, and failures to appear as criteria that may be considered to deny an accused bail. Wynn's law would protect everyday Canadians. It would protect all of us and law enforcement officers from those who should not be out on the streets, like Rehn, by ensuring informed decisions can be made, enabled by knowledge of the criminal record of an accused. It is common sense and it is just.

This bill has received overwhelming support from communities all over Canada. The Mounted Police Professional Association of Canada, the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness, and the former minister of justice and attorney general of Alberta, Jonathan Denis, who was in cabinet at the time of Wynn's murder, all support this bill. It easily passed the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee unanimously. Then the Senate passed the bill by an overwhelming majority. Rank and file law enforcement officers have given their support to this legislation, but incredibly, inexplicably, the Liberals do not agree and vowed to vote against this life-saving bill.

In November, the member for Charlottetown, when he was parliamentary secretary to the minister of justice, said Wynn's law would "unnecessarily complicate and lengthen the bail process" and remove discretion from the crown. The Minister of Justice has also said, "The measures that are articulated in this bill are measures that are in place at this time", but they are not. This just is not the case.

• (1810)

Of course, many prosecutors do present criminal history at a bail hearing, but some do not, and that is the problem. That is the problem we can fix.

Bill S-217 would not impose any undue burden or complications on the crown or on law enforcement. It would not infringe on the discretion of a judge or justice of the peace at a bail hearing to make a determination on the question of bail. Decisions would still be made based on the specific facts and circumstances of the individual case, with a complete picture of the accused and the risk to Canadians.

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This is not about politics. It is about a life that could have been saved and many others that could be saved as a result. I urge my colleagues opposite to do the right thing and support this bill so that another mother does not have to explain to her kids that a loophole helped kill their dad, that a preventable measure could have saved a life.

RCMP officers and all levels of law enforcement and first responders serve Canadians selflessly 365 days of the year. My mother-in-law, Dianne Saskiw, worked in the Two Hills RCMP detachment centre for almost 40 years. She has seen first hand the officers' brave and compassionate dedication and sacrifice and the important role of RCMP officers in Alberta's rural communities. Here in the House of Commons, it is incumbent on us to ensure that there are safeguards in place to protect those who choose a life of service and risk to themselves for all Canadians.

Constable Wynn's widow, Shelly MacInnis-Wynn, has been a tireless champion of this bill. On behalf of all Canadians, this strong woman is advocating for the successful passage of Wynn's law. Her determination and her courage are unwavering. Last summer, Ms. MacInnis-Wynn gave powerful and emotional testimony at the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee. She asked those present to close their eyes for four seconds. She said:

In those four seconds, a constable was taken away from his community, a husband was taken away from his wife, a father was taken away from his three sons, and a son and a brother was taken away from his mother and sisters—in four seconds.

Every day I wake up wishing that I could take those four seconds back, but I can't. There is nothing I can do to change that.

Every day I have to live my life alone, not have Dave by my side enjoying the moments we were supposed to have together as a family and as husband and wife.

Every day his children have to experience new things and new milestones without their dad.... They don't have any more chances to make new memories.

Changing this one simple word could save a lifetime of happiness for somebody else, and that somebody else could have easily been you. Dave was the unfortunate one that happened to be there that night, but it could easily have been anybody else.

Four seconds represents the time when Ms. MacInnis-Wynn went from being a wife to a widow. In four seconds, her world was shattered. In four seconds, a sister lost a brother, parents lost their son, a wife lost a loving husband, and three young sons lost their hero. All of their lives changed forever.

It will take less than four seconds to stand up and vote yes for Wynn's law, less than four seconds to vote for a law that would prevent future senseless murders and that would protect innocent Canadians everywhere. On behalf of the people of Lakeland, I urge my colleagues to do so.

• (1815)

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill S-217, known as Wynn's law.

I would like to start by offering my sincere condolences and sympathies to Constable David Wynn's widow Shelly MacInnes-Wynn, and her entire family.

I would also like to thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for his tireless work on Wynn's law. He has done an incredible job.

When Constable Wynn was shot and killed in the line of duty, it pointed to a dangerous loophole in the Canadian justice system. His killer Shawn Rehn was a career criminal who was out on bail. His killer was granted bail despite the fact that he had more than 50 prior criminal convictions, 38 outstanding charges, as well as arrest warrants for failing to appear in court. That is incredible. It seems unreal that an accused with this type of criminal record would be granted bail. However, we now know that his extensive criminal history was not brought to the attention of the person presiding over his bail hearing, which is shameful. While it is common practice that the prosecutor provide a judge or justice of the peace with the bail applicant's criminal history, it is not legally required. It is difficult to imagine that Shawn Rehn would have been granted bail had his full criminal history been disclosed.

It is an absolute tragedy that Constable Wynn had to die. His death could have been prevented. This tragedy points to a serious loophole in our Criminal Code that must be addressed. The safety and security of Canadians should be the priority for any government. We cannot go back and prevent the death of Constable Wynn, but we can respond in the present by closing the loophole that led to his death. I believe that Wynn's law is the logical response to this tragic event. Wynn's law would require prosecutors to disclose a bail applicant's criminal history at a bail hearing. It is very simple. It would also mandate that failures to appear in court must be disclosed. This legislation introduces a simple measure that has the potential to save lives and increase public safety.

My constituents in the neighbouring riding of Edmonton Griesbach have been very vocal in their support of this bill. At community events, many have told me that they strongly support passing this legislation. I have also received written feedback from hundreds of constituents with respect to Wynn's law. I would like to share some of the feedback that I have received from my constituents on Wynn's law.

Doris wrote, "It's only common sense that previous charges be included in bail hearings, especially in cases where [there is] a long record of breaking laws and ignoring court dates."

Stanley wrote, "It will help stop innocent lives [from] being taken by dangerous criminals. Plus a lot of lives could have been saved if this law had been in effect long ago."

Jeanne wrote, "I find it 'criminal' not to pass this law. Shame on the Liberals! Do the right thing!"

Cathy wrote, "Wynn's law is a must!!!"

Susan wrote, "Judges can't make proper decisions without full disclosure of a criminal's history. Get this law put through. Police and public safety should always come before a dangerous criminal."

• (1820)

I cannot stress enough to the House that these are real people with real feedback. I am speaking for them.

Bob wrote me to say, "This [Constable Wynn] could be any one of us. The judge definitely needs to be aware of a criminal's past history in order to bring about a fair judgment".

Private Members' Business

Wendy wrote me to say, “Judges need full disclosure of the criminal's past in order to make a decision that is best for society, not for the criminal”.

Daryl wrote me to say, “Not passing this law is irresponsible and an insult to law-abiding citizens”.

Herb wrote me to say, “Wynn's law should be passed immediately”. I hear Herb.

Glen wrote me to say, “[Wynn's law] should have been done years ago”.

Al wrote me to say, “[Wynn's law], it's a no-brainer bill”.

Perhaps that last comment summarizes it the best. Wynn's law is common-sense legislation. Our judges and justices of the peace cannot be expected to make a fair ruling at a bail hearing without all of the relevant facts.

Again, Wynn's law is a no-brainer. My constituents get it. Canadians across the country get it. Why do the Liberals not get it?

It is time the Liberal government put the safety and security of law-abiding Canadians ahead of criminals.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to speak to Wynn's law as well. I would like to thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for bringing the bill forward. He has been a tireless champion on it, and has worked with me in my riding as well to raise awareness of the issue. I would like to thank him for all his efforts.

This issue hit us pretty close to home in northern Alberta. I will start by backing up a bit. We all remember the events that took place in 2005 in Mayerthorpe, where four police officers were gunned down. That was right near my riding. That was something that rocked the nation at the time, so the day that David Wynn was killed brought back all those memories.

I know my own communities were reeling with those memories. We all thought those days were behind us, that we were not going to see another police officer fall in the line of duty in northern Alberta again. However, there we were a few short years later, and another fallen officer. I remember the day well when we heard on the radio that a police officer had been checking licence plates in the parking lot at the casino, and that had led to him being gunned down.

For me, that was an introspective point in my life. I thought about my time as an automotive mechanic. I was working in Barrhead. I thought that guy probably went to work today thinking it was just another day of work, the same as I did. I am sure he kissed his wife goodbye, and said goodbye to his sons, but never thought he would not see them again in the evening, or whenever he got off his shift. That is a powerful feeling. He was of a similar age to what I am now, and I know the feelings I have every evening when I come home and see my kids. David Wynn is a real story of humanity. The fact that he chose the career as a police officer to protect his community is profound.

I would like to thank all those who stand in the line of duty, protecting our communities and working hard every day. Some of my colleagues with whom I sit here have done that as well. I take my hat off to them. Through the process of the bill progressing, I have

had an opportunity to chat with the member for Yellowhead, who is a former police officer. He worked in the RCMP for over 25 years. He has some great stories about protecting communities and things like that. He also says there are some more ugly sides to it. The bill we have before us today, termed Wynn's law, elicits those feelings of the times when we really see where our police force members put their lives on the line, quite literally.

I remember just sitting in my vehicle that day. I heard it over the radio on my drive to work in the morning. I remember thinking, what are we going to do next? How do we solve a problem like this? For me, at the time it seemed beyond my grasp to see how we would solve an issue like this. There are people out there for whom there seems to be no solution.

Today, we cannot reverse the actions of this individual. We cannot reverse the life taken, but we can, in honour of his memory, stand up in this place. That is one of the huge privileges we all have as we stand or sit in this place. We have the ability to see wrongs of the past, and issues that have places and areas in law where we can actually make a big difference. I know this is one of the things I continually say whenever anyone asks me why I pursued becoming a member of Parliament, it is to make a difference, to do something good in the world.

Bill S-217, in light of the situation around it, entitled “Wynn's law” is, to me, the whole reason why we are here today. It is to solve some of these problems we see in the world, to make the world a better place, and work to close a loophole.

● (1825)

I am sometimes frustrated by lawyers. The very first time I met the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, I asked him what he did, and he told me he was a lawyer. I said that we need more rule of law and less rule of lawyers. However, there are times when having a keen legal mind on some of these things, and seeing how we can, through the rule of law, solve some of these problems in the world, is much appreciated.

I typically see things from 30,000 feet, in broad strokes. With this particular bill, just a change of the word “may” to “shall” could make all the difference. It could make the difference between someone being out on the street and later killing someone and someone being kept incarcerated so that he or she is not out on the street gunning down police officers. That, to me, is profound.

I take my hat off to the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for even knowing about this in the first place, although I will say that if members need to know anything, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton is a walking encyclopedia. There is no doubt about that, particularly when it comes to this place. If members want to know the name of the riding a member represents and how many votes that person won by, they should ask the member for St. Albert—Edmonton. He will tell them lickety-split. There is no doubt about that. It is no wonder he would come up with such a profound bill in this place. He knows the workings of this place well. He has been at it a long time. I take my hat off to him.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am fairly emotionally attached to this whole issue, but I was at a bit of a loss as to how to deal with it. At the time, I was not even considering being elected, but now that I am here, I am very happy to be standing in this place and arguing in defence of Wynn's law. It is a concrete action that could be taken to do two things: to recognize the sacrifice of Mr. Wynn and to make sure that it does not happen again.

We know that after the fallen four in Mayerthorpe happened, we all said, "Never again", and we honoured their memory. There is now a national memorial in the town of Mayerthorpe that I drive by often. However, the passing of David Wynn struck just too close to home.

I plead for everyone to support the bill. I think it is a bill that is long overdue. It is a monument to the hard work of the member for St. Albert—Edmonton but would also be a monument to David Wynn, who lost his life on that fateful day.

• (1830)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me just say at the outset that I want to acknowledge the hard work of Senator Bob Runciman in championing this bill in the Senate, as well as my predecessor, Brent Rathgeber, who introduced a similar bill in the last Parliament.

The essence of Bill S-217, known as Wynn's law, is about changing one word in the Criminal Code, one word, to change a loophole that cost Constable David Wynn his life when he was murdered, a loophole that imposed a life sentence on Auxiliary Constable Derek Bond, who forever will have to live with the consequences of being shot at close range.

Constable David Wynn should be with us today, but he is not, and Auxiliary Constable Bond should not be living a life sentence of hell, but he is. The change of one word in the Criminal Code could have made all the difference, and that one word change is to change "may" to "shall" in section 518 of the Criminal Code to make it mandatory for prosecutors to lead evidence of the criminal history of bail applicants.

The criminal history of bail applicants is always relevant and material to determine the question of bail. It is always relevant and material because without such information, it is not possible for judges or magistrates to properly exercise their discretion as to whether someone should be kept behind bars or let out on to the street, and yet, section 518 of the Criminal Code provides that it is discretionary whether this information is brought forward. It simply does not make sense, and Wynn's law would fix that.

There have been some who have said that Wynn's law is unnecessary because the criminal history of bail applicants is almost always put forward. I say to those critics that simply is not good enough. It is not good enough for Constable Wynn, who is no longer with us. It is not good enough for Constable Wynn's family, who lost a husband, a father, and a brother. It is not good enough for my community of St. Albert, which lost a brave constable who ultimately gave his life to keep my community safe. It is not good enough for Auxiliary Constable Bond and his family, whose lives have forever been changed.

It simply is not good enough that the criminal history of bail applicants is almost always put forward. The criminal history of bail applicants must always be put forward so that what happened to Constable Wynn and Auxiliary Constable Bond never happens again.

Some critics of Wynn's law say that it would cause delay in our justice system. I say how could that be, given that such information is a keystroke away and, at most, a phone call away?

In closing, let me say that we must never forget Constable Wynn and Auxiliary Constable Bond. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians to close this fatal loophole in the Criminal Code. We owe it to Constable Wynn, and we owe it to Auxiliary Constable Bond, and we owe it to Canadians.

• (1835)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 8, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 8, I posed a question to the government on behalf of Warrant Officer Roger Perreault, a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, regarding his eligibility for the critical injury benefit.

Warrant Officer Perreault is an Afghanistan veteran who has served his country honourably. In addition to serving in Afghanistan, Warrant Officer Perreault served twice in Bosnia and in three special duty areas over a span of 27 years.

Warrant Officer Perreault enlisted at the age of 19 and is a combat engineer. He is due to be medically released from the military later this year. He was injured in 2006 in a blast from an improvised explosive device, IED, while serving in Afghanistan. He has had three back surgeries, two hip replacements, and other complications.

Now in the process of being released from the military, Warrant Officer Perreault is being denied the critical injury benefit by Veterans Affairs, being told that at age 46, his injuries are the result of just his body wearing out, as opposed to the injury he received in the IED blast.

Rejected by the Department of Veterans Affairs for the critical injury benefit in March 2016, Warrant Officer Perreault appealed that decision to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. On January 24 of this year, Warrant Officer Perreault was denied his appeal by the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, which upheld the decision by Veterans Affairs to refuse him the critical injury benefit that he had applied for on the basis of the injuries he received from an IED blast in Afghanistan.

The critical injury benefit provides a tax-free lump sum award for Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans who, after March 31, 2006, sustained a service-related severe and traumatic injury or developed an acute disease caused by a sudden and single incident which resulted in an immediate and severe impairment and interference in quality of life.

On the evening of October 7, 2006 while on mission in Afghanistan, Warrant Officer Perreault was on a routine patrol in a LAV III. He had stopped behind another LAV III, and dismounted when a large explosion ripped the left side of the LAV, throwing him to the ground.

In shock from the explosion, Warrant Officer Perreault prepared for an ambush attack. Once he had rested from the shock of the explosion, he started to experience pain through his body. Eventually he was medevaced by helicopter to Kandahar, and later was repatriated to Canada.

I hope the Minister of Veterans Affairs agrees that getting blown up by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan is a sudden and single incident that is service related. Since being medically repatriated back to Canada, Warrant Officer Perreault has undergone numerous urgent surgeries from the time of the explosion.

For the record, I now quote from the letter that Warrant Officer Perreault's military doctor wrote on his behalf to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, "Warrant Officer Perreault's clinical course has been complicated by numerous hospital admissions, recurrent DVTs, numerous hip surgeries, including a total right hip replacement, radicular neck pain, chronic intractable pain, a large meniscal tear, PTSD and major depression. And this is only a partial list of his medical history. In summary, Warrant Officer Perreault has had extensive physical and mental injuries directly related to the IED blast in Afghanistan in 2006. In my opinion, he qualifies for the critical injury benefit."

I also note for the record, Warrant Officer Perreault's military medical doctor provided pages and pages of supporting documentation that were included with his supporting letter to Veterans Affairs.

Adjournment Proceedings

Contrast the doctor's professional medical opinion to that of the appeal board, which claimed that the best they could read from the doctor's report, was that Warrant Perreault sustained, and I quote the appeal board, "a back injury, which had some pre-existing elements," and that their definition of "complex treatments that are related to the incident in 2006," had not been met, claiming that the opinion of the attending military medical doctor was not credible.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

Our government recognizes the notable contributions that veterans and Canadian Armed Forces members have made and continue to make to preserve the peace and protect the safety of Canadians here and around the world. Our top priority is to ensure that veterans and their families get the support that they need.

[*English*]

As the member knows, we cannot comment on specific cases for privacy reasons. However, I can discuss how Veterans Affairs provides many programs and services for the mental, as well as physical, health of our veterans.

Canada's veterans now receive more local, in-person government services, as well as better access to case managers than under the previous government. Last summer, Veterans Affairs Canada began reopening the nine Veterans Affairs offices that had been closed across the country by the previous government. We are on track to have every office reopened by spring 2017.

Moreover, we will also open a new office in Surrey, B.C. in May of this year.

[*Translation*]

Veterans Affairs Canada is currently hiring 400 new front-line employees to help veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, and RCMP members and their families to get the best possible service in their own community.

[*English*]

This includes new caseworkers, which will allow us to get to a 25:1 ratio.

[*Translation*]

In budget 2016, we kept our promise to improve benefits for veterans, including by providing them with better compensation, more choices, and more support for planning their financial future.

We are giving more money to veterans who are sick or injured by increasing the disability award to a maximum of \$360,000.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

We increased the earnings lost benefit to 90% of an eligible veteran's salary at the time of his or her release to ensure stable financial security during rehabilitation.

We also expanded access to the permanent impairment allowance to better support veterans who had their career options limited by a service-related illness or injury and renamed the benefit the career impact allowance to better reflects its intention.

The Department of Veterans Affairs service standard for disability benefits is to process the first application within 16 weeks, and it is taking a hard look at the disability application process to expedite decision-making and to respond to the needs of veterans promptly. Delivering timely benefit decisions is an area where we can and we must do better. In 2016, we saw a 19% increase in the number of disability claims. This is actually a good thing. It means more veterans are coming forward for help.

We are working at putting in measures to decrease the backlog, simplify decision-making processes, and transfer of medical records.

Veterans Affairs Canada is working diligently with the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that all veterans and their families receive the support and the programs they deserve.

• (1845)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, veterans are not interested in hearing how many new bureaucrats have been hired or that empty offices are being opened in government-held ridings. Veterans want action. I request a thorough review of this case.

The documentation submitted by Warrant Officer Perreault's military doctor should not have been summarily dismissed by the Department of Veteran's Affairs, or the appeal board the way it was. In the professional medical opinion of the attending military doctor, Warrant Officer Roger Perreault meets the criteria for the critical injury benefit.

What happened to the election promise to draw from all the circumstances of a veteran's case, and all the evidence presented to the government, every reasonable inference in favour of the applicant?

Warrant Officer Roger Perreault is a Canadian hero. Let us start treating him like one.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, Canada's veterans deserve the full, constant support of their government and of society.

[Translation]

The government is determined to ensure that all Canadian Armed Forces members and all veterans who are injured in the line of duty receive the support and care they need, when they need it.

[English]

I invite the member opposite and any member of the House to meet with me with any concerns they may have and to work together to support our troops, our vets, and their families.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to address a question I first

raised in the House back on November 2. I asked the defence minister to lay out what Canada's interest was in participating in a UN mission in Africa.

As members know, we have been saying for some time that the only national interest we can figure out is the Prime Minister's own interest in getting a seat at the UN Security Council.

We know this dialogue has been taking place, but only from one side. There were some premature announcements by the minister of sending over 600 troops to Africa, \$450 million, and 150 members of the police forces going to help in UN missions in Africa. That could be in Mali, the Congo, Ethiopia, or Uganda. There are a number of different places where UN missions are currently under way in Africa. However, all fingers seem to point to our troops being deployed to Mali.

Mali is an incredibly dangerous mission. It is one that we question whether it serves Canada's national interest. We know many different nations are providing peacekeeping troops to the Mali mission, over 13,000. We also know it is the deadliest mission out of all of the UN missions, accounting for over 90% of UN peacekeeper casualties last year alone.

When ISIS members heard that Canadian peacekeepers could be deployed to Mali, they said that they would love to use the blue helmets for target practice. We also know this is a mission where the UN is spending a great amount of resources on force protection, not on the protection of civilian populations.

The problem is that the minister and the Prime Minister seem to be hell-bent on ploughing ahead on a mission that is not in the national interest of Canada. At the end of the day, it will not provide the type of relief we hope to see for the people of Mali and other nations of Africa.

More and more veterans are concerned that Canada has not learned from its past. The lessons learned in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia never really paid off until the UN mission ended and other forces were brought in to make peace.

The minister wants to talk peace operations. We know that if we are to be successful, there are other way Canada can do this, and there is still a great risk of the spread of ISIS, even though it is currently on the run in Mosul, in Raqqa, and in Iraq.

Adjournment Proceedings

First, we have an obligation, first and foremost, to our troops to use them appropriately. Second, we have to ensure we put them in a position that when we do call upon them as the Government of Canada, they are there under the right chain of command with the right rules of engagement. That does not happen under the bureaucracy of the United Nations. It happens under other joint operations through NATO, through international security forces that are set up from time to time to deal with things like terrorism and the atrocities that we are witnessing in Mali and other African nations at this time.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to finally answer the question. How does this serve Canada's national interest?

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the opportunity he is providing to discuss this important issue for a second time in two days.

On November 16, my colleague opposite asked what was the point in Canada deploying soldiers to UN peacekeeping operations. We plan on deploying troops to peacekeeping missions because we made a commitment to do so in our election platform.

This commitment is part of the mandate of the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, last August, the government made a commitment to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. Why? It is because our government is firmly committed at the international level and wants to contribute in many ways to ensure that the world is a safer place. We have developed a three-year strategy with a budget of \$450 million involving a number of departments.

Canada has also offered to host the next UN peacekeeping defence ministerial in 2017. This will be a defining event for us. It is important more than ever before that Canada be heard around the world. The former U.S. president said in the House last June that what the world needs is more Canada.

My colleague opposite also alluded to the possibility of Canada obtaining a seat at the UN Security Council. That would be a good way for Canada to actively promote Canadian values. It would allow us to achieve very noble objectives, especially in terms of governance, respect for diversity, and respect for human rights, especially those of women and refugees.

However, no decisions have been made regarding the location or length of the deployment, and no deadline has been set for making that decision. What I can say is that we have carefully examined the various options for missions led by the United Nations. Our analysis and consideration are still under way, with very clear objectives. I repeat: the safety of our men and women in uniform is the most important thing, and this aspect greatly affects our planning and decision-making processes.

Our actions will always be aimed at reducing as much as possible the level of risk our Canadian Armed Forces personnel are exposed to. We also want to ensure that any troops deployed as part of a peacekeeping mission have the appropriate equipment and the training needed to carry out the mission they are tasked with.

It is our duty to ensure that, before deploying our troops, we always seek to maximize the impact of our presence and our actions. We believe in the need to establish firm rules of engagement to ensure the success of our missions. These rules of engagement enable troops to defend themselves and the people they are working with. We are also committed to expanding the role women play in peacekeeping operations at all levels, particularly in key positions.

As I said yesterday, the chief of the defence staff will always be fully in command of our troops. Before we commit, we also have to ensure that our allies and primary partners fully understand our approach. As I said yesterday, our approach is considered wise and pragmatic, and rightly so.

In accordance with the mandate Canadians gave us in 2015, we are committed to taking concrete action and playing a constructive role to make the world a safer place.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I know that the parliamentary secretary is new to the job. He said that there is no deadline for making the announcement on when Canada is going to deploy our troops on a UN mission. I would like to inform him that the Minister of National Defence said that he would make that announcement before the end of 2016. Here we are, two months into 2017, and we still do not know where our troops are going or why they are going.

The minister and the government need to define what is the national interest for Canada to be involved in a UN mission. We know that the UN structure has not provided the results recently, or in the past, in Africa as to peace outcomes in protecting vulnerable populations. We also need to have this debate in the House of Commons, with a vote, once the mission is defined, before we deploy any troops.

Canadians deserve to have some transparency. We are not getting it from the government. We are not seeing it in any way, shape, or form. It is time we actually had all the details so that our troops know where they are going, we know what the mission is, and we can actually have an intelligent discussion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, our government has taken concrete action to fight terrorism and has made a concrete commitment to help make the world a safer place.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canadians understand the importance of supporting peacekeeping operations, and they support us in our approach to playing a more substantial, constructive, and inclusive role in the world. By participating in peacekeeping missions, Canada will contribute to defending and protecting civilian populations, especially women and children, who all too often are the hardest-hit victims of armed conflict.

We are determined to do everything in our power to fight sexual violence and all forms of human rights abuse.

As I said, we will carefully consider all of the options to determine how the Canadian Armed Forces can best contribute to peace and security.

I thank my colleague for his interest and concern for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

ETHICS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this evening for tonight's adjournment proceedings.

I want to come back to a question I had the opportunity to ask the government back in November about ethics. It is in a truly collaborative spirit that I wish to begin this evening's adjournment proceedings.

I want to remind everyone of what was happening at the time. We were asking questions regularly about the fact that people could attend cash-for-access events where \$1,500 would get you access to various Liberal government ministers.

My question was also about the sponsorship scandal. We learned that the Liberals would not be paying back one cent of the \$600,000 still missing thanks to the dirty tricks of a certain Jacques Corriveau, who was very involved in the Liberal Party at the time.

Before the holidays we thought we were done with these ethics cases. We thought that the Liberals got the message, but that was not so. During the holidays, we found out that the Prime Minister decided to stay the course and keep breaking his own rules, paying no heed to the suggestions he himself made to his colleagues. He accepted an invitation from one of his friends, as he put it, the Aga Khan. It was an all-expense paid trip. This had people talking. The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle filed a complaint with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I will not read the entire letter. I will just read an excerpt:

...Prime Minister Trudeau and his family travelled on a Canadian Forces jet to the Bahamas during the holiday season to stay at His Royal Highness the Aga Khan's privately owned Bell Island.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle pointed out that the code governing conflicts of interests of members of the House of Commons is very clear: neither a member nor any member of a member's family shall accept, directly or indirectly, any gift or other benefit, except compensation authorized by law.

The Aga Khan Foundation Canada has been the beneficiary of tens of millions of dollars in government contributions to international development projects and received \$30 million from the Government of Canada for its Ottawa headquarters. The Aga

Khan is a member of the board of directors of the Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

The letter indicates that the Prime Minister himself noted, in his open and accountable government document, that public office holders have an obligation to perform their official duties and arrange their private affairs in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny, and that that obligation is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.

I think that is a fairly clear statement. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle sent the letter to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

On February 13, the member received a letter back from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who was following up on the request for an inquiry. I would like to read some excerpts from that letter.

● (1900)

[*English*]

In my letter of January 10, 2017, I indicated that I would notify you and [the Prime Minister] of my decision as to whether an inquiry is warranted within 15 working days either of receiving [the Prime Minister]'s response or after the expiration of the 30-day response period.... At this time, I have received a response from [the Prime Minister], which I have reviewed.

Based on the information contained in the request and the response, I have determined an inquiry under the Code is warranted.

[*Translation*]

In light of all of that, I would like to ask the members opposite the following question: do they intend to follow the rules set out by the Prime Minister regarding government members' ethics in the House?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his questions.

First, the government clearly stated its intention to move forward with amendments to the Election Act in order to provide better oversight and to better manage a system that works very well and is ethically sound—the benchmark for political party financing in Canada, and indeed the entire western world.

Therefore, I can assure my hon. colleague that we firmly intend to continue to try to do better and we ask the parties opposite, as well as our own, to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner that Canadians can be very proud of.

As for the second issue that the member raised, the Prime Minister clearly stated many times his intention to co-operate with the commissioner in any investigation or request for information regarding conflicts of interest. I am convinced that the Prime Minister will do so in the time allotted and with the co-operation expected by the commissioner.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, what is frustrating about the responses we keep hearing over and over again in the House is that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons keep repeating that the Prime Minister will answer any questions the Ethics Commissioner asks him.

Adjournment Proceedings

We are here to represent Canadians, who have given the Ethics Commissioners a mandate. What we are asking the Prime Minister is whether he will admit that he broke the rules, and what concrete action he plans to take to ensure that it never happens again. Will he put an end to the serious ethics violations being committed by his government ministers, once and for all?

By promising a bill to better regulate and better govern a system that is already in place, the party opposite is acknowledging that it did break certain rules and that it plans to change them to ensure that they are followed.

Amending legislation to make legal what was previously illegal is not improving one's ways.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, we have always complied with all relevant laws and regulations.

Personally, as the former national director of the party, I have a lot of experience in prescribing rules and ensuring that the rules and laws governing political financing are followed to the letter. I can assure my hon. colleague that the elected members on this side of the House comply with the statutes and rules governing political financing both in their actions and behaviours.

• (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:05 p.m.)

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