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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 3, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[English]

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

The House resumed from November 17, 2016, consideration of the motion that Bill C-307, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (tamper resistance and abuse deterrence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-307, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (tamper resistance and abuse deterrence). This legislation proposes to allow the Minister of Health to implement regulations to restrict access to non-tamper-resistant controlled substances or classes of controlled substances. The bill also imposes an annual reporting requirement on the Minister of Health if no regulations are made “specifying controlled substances or classes of controlled substances that must have tamper-resistant properties or abuse-deterrent formulations”.

As we consider the bill, which is principally aimed at curbing prescription opioid abuse, it is important to remember how we arrived at the current overdose crisis, which has claimed an estimated 20,000 Canadian lives over the last 20 years.

For over two decades, opioids have been overused and over-prescribed by doctors for pain management and other causes, leading to many patients becoming dependent and addicted.

Canada has among the highest per capita volume of dispensed opioids in the world, totalling some 19.1 million in Canada in 2015 alone. That is up from 18.7 million the year before. This is about one opioid prescription written for every two Canadians last year.

Even though there are no credible peer-reviewed studies that demonstrate that opioids afford more benefit than harm for chronic pain, opioid use has been marketed beyond palliative care and cancer patients for regular use to people experiencing back pain and other common ailments.

Manufacturers, incorrectly, led prescribers to believe that addiction was a rare consequence of using prescription opioids long-term

and that fewer than 1% of patients would become addicted. However, in reality, the addiction rate is estimated to be 10%, with 30% suffering from opioid use disorder.

In 2012, Purdue Pharma Canada, the manufacturer of the potent prescription opioid OxyContin, pulled OxyContin from the market and replaced it with OxyNEO, a tamper-resistant alternative that is difficult to powderize, snort, or inject. Purdue strongly supports changing legislative and regulatory regimes to mandate that over time the entire prescription opioid market be tamper-resistant.

Under the previous, Conservative government, Health Canada drafted regulations that would have compelled opioid manufacturers to make their oxycodone products, and eventually all opioids, tamper-resistant. However, the current Liberal government abandoned that plan in April 2016, on the basis that there is insufficient proof to back up claims that tamper-resistant formulations have positive policy benefits.

Health Canada concluded that requiring tamper resistance would not have the intended health and safety impact of reducing overall drug abuse. At the time, the Minister of Health told the Standing Committee on Health, “It would be wise if it worked, but the result is that the introduction of tamper-resistant products only serves to increase the use of other products on the market. You can't take a single approach to a drug.”

To be sure, independent expert opinion on tamper resistance ranges from the view that its application has very limited efficacy for addressing opioid abuse, to the view that tamper resistance is a counterproductive move aimed in part at extending the drug manufacturers' patent protections.

Testifying at the health committee's fall 2016 study of the opioid crisis, proposed by the New Democrats, Dr. Philip Emberley, director of professional affairs for the Canadian Pharmacists Association, said:

...we still see tamper-resistance as one solution, [but] not the only solution.... [T] here are some numbers out of the U.S. that say it has had some effect. However, we have to be very cautious of the unintended consequences, which may end up being even worse than what we were trying to prevent in the first place.

Private Members' Business

To understand these potential consequences, a U.S. study published in the academic journal *JAMA Psychiatry* looked at what happened in drug use patterns before and after tamper-resistant OxyContin came on the market. It found that abuse of OxyContin dropped significantly, from 45% to 26% of all users, but heroin use rose from 25% to 50% and effectively cancelled out any drop in OxyContin abuse. Many simply kept using OxyContin, and about one third of them found a way around the tamper-resistant formulation.

Another 43% were simply unable to crush the new, tamper-resistant pill, so they just swallowed it and got high anyway. Only 3% of those surveyed gave up the drug altogether when the new, tamper-resistant formulation came out.

Dr. Emberley's caution was reiterated at the health committee by one of Canada's leading drug safety experts, Dr. David Juurlink, who said this:

I think abuse-deterrent formulations are a good thing generally. You can crush them, and you can chew them, and you can get a much higher level in your blood than you would by taking them intact, but you can't powderize them, inject them, or snort them, but it is a mistake to think this is the way out of this problem. These products tend to materialize on the market as the patent on the original product expires, so a cynic might wonder if this is primarily a business decision.

The fact is that the primary route by which opioids are abused is oral. I know for a fact that physicians, when they hear about these abuse-deterrent formulations, think that these are somehow impervious to abuse. They are totally abusable. If you could snap your fingers and have them all be abuse deterred, great. It is not a major part of the solution to this problem, in my view.

At best, I could say that the impacts of tamper-resistant opioids are presently unclear. However, because New Democrats are unwilling to dismiss any potential tool to address the opioid crisis, we believe that this bill should be rigorously studied at the health committee, with extreme caution paid to the potential for unintended harm. Let me be clear. We will not hesitate to oppose this legislation if, based on the preponderance of evidence, we determine that tamper resistance is likely to be counterproductive.

Ultimately, New Democrats want a much more comprehensive response to the opioid crisis. Since last fall, our party has been calling on the federal government to declare opioid overdose a national public health emergency, because such a declaration would empower Canada's chief public health officer with the authority to open temporary clinics and supervised consumption sites on an emergency basis, and allocate emergency funding on the scale needed to comprehensively address the opioid crisis.

The Minister of Health has repeatedly dismissed our calls, on the basis that the federal government already has the ability to take these measures without an emergency declaration. However, here we are today, in April 2017, with no end in sight to the opioid crisis. The legislation to streamline supervised consumption site approvals remains stalled in the upper chamber, and budget 2017 fails to devote a single dollar in emergency funding to combat the crisis. Somewhat shockingly, budget 2017 also makes deep cuts to addictions treatment funding, when access to publicly funded programs is already appallingly insufficient across this country.

As the opioid crisis escalated in 2012, the Conservatives cut funding for addictions treatment by approximately 20%, allocating \$150 million over five years. That is still \$40 million more than the Liberals' entire allocation for the Canadian drugs and substances

strategy just announced in the last budget. The Canadian drugs and substances strategy expands on the now defunct national anti-drug strategy's pillars of prevention, treatment, and enforcement to include harm reduction. In our view, that is a positive change, but it means a broader mandate with only 20% of the anti-drug strategy's funding.

With a federal reaction like this, one could be forgiven for believing that the opioid crisis is over. However, in my home city of Vancouver the crisis is getting worse by the day. Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services reported 162 overdose response calls for the week of March 20, a 56% increase from the previous week, when 104 calls were responded to. To date, in 2017, there have been 100 overdose deaths in Vancouver alone. There were 215 in all of 2016. If rates of overdose deaths continue at this pace, Vancouver could see nearly 400 deaths in 2017, double the number recorded in 2016.

In order to reverse this trend, the City of Vancouver is advocating for increased access to treatment-on-demand options. Apparently, this request has fallen on deaf ears at the federal level. Indeed, the Prime Minister seemed to acknowledge it last month when he visited Vancouver and pledged this: "It's really important for all Canadians to consider that this is something we cannot continue to ignore, we cannot continue to stigmatize. We need to start addressing this as the real societal health problem it actually is." However, as former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden used to say, "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value."

● (1110)

Canadians do not need more empty words or broken promises from their federal government; they need real support to end the opioid crisis. I call on the Prime Minister to honour his word by taking emergency action to finally and fully address this immense human tragedy.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today in support of Bill C-307 to give the Minister of Health the authority to require tamper-resistant forms of drugs that are being tampered with and then used for criminal use.

Canada is in the midst of a massive public health crisis related to opioids. Codeine, fentanyl, oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine have become household names, it seems, in the Canadian public, and of course this has a lot to do with the crisis at hand.

Private Members' Business

Whether it is diverted pharmaceuticals, fentanyl purchased over the Internet from China, or stolen horse tranquilizers, dangerous and lethal opioids are making their way onto the streets of Canada and the consequences are fatal.

The most alarming thing is how quickly opioids are growing, both in use and in the number of overdoses. To put things in perspective, the chief coroner of British Columbia told us at the health committee that illicit drug deaths involving fentanyl increased from 5% in 2012 to 60% in 2016.

This is not just a crisis that affects those who find themselves without a home. There are 55,000 Canadian high-school students who reported in September 2016 that they had abused some sort of opioid pain reliever in the past year.

In Ontario, in 2010, one in eight deaths of individuals aged 25 to 34 was found to be opioid-related. Families are being destroyed; lives are being lost; and all Canadians are experiencing reduced access to health and social services because of the resources required to look after this crisis.

For me, this public emergency hits close to home. Lethbridge is near the epicentre of this epidemic in Canada. Last fall, five men in my riding were arrested for possessing just over 1,000 fentanyl pills destined for the streets of Lethbridge. Several subsequent arrests resulted in police recovering hundreds more fentanyl-laced pills.

What has this meant for Lethbridge? Without being alarmist, we have seen organized crime in our city increase drastically, and the users of these drugs have made parts of Lethbridge no-go zones. There is a playground in my community where children used to enjoy playing regularly, and now it is known as "needle park". This is a place where children no longer play and parents no longer feel safe, because of the needles that are left on the ground.

Even for those not in direct proximity to drug dealers or opioid users, the effects of this epidemic are still felt. In Lethbridge, our first responders have all had to divert significant resources to address this crisis. This means that other crimes committed within our community are under-investigated or not investigated at all.

It also means that EMS responders are increasingly overworked as they respond to the spike in drug overdoses. It means that firefighters have to deal with increased risks when they respond to residential fires for fear that they could be dealing with a contaminated illicit drug lab or equipment thereof.

This is to say nothing of the increased burden on our social service agencies. Lethbridge has punched far above its weight when it comes to the Syrian refugees who have come into our community. This influx of refugees has stretched our resources to the max because of the lack of support from the Liberal government.

Many of these organizations have had to punch above their weight and are now starting to reach their breaking point. This is on top of the opioid crisis and the mental health crisis that results from the jobs crisis in Alberta.

My heart goes out to the mental health workers in my community for the remarkable work they are doing around the clock and the way they are trying to divert this issue. This crisis has a human face, as sons, daughters, husbands, wives, cousins, brothers, and sisters are

all lost to lethal street drugs laced with these opioids. I recognize that the opioid crisis is multi-faceted, but Bill C-307 is one key step to cutting it off at the source.

Criminal enterprises have far too easy a time diverting legitimate pharmaceuticals to illicit street drugs. This is because the most common forms of opioid-based drugs are easily manipulated. Prescription pills can be ground down to snort, or the active opioid compounds can be extracted and used as a building block for different street drugs.

Tamper-resistant forms of these pharmaceuticals can take several forms to reduce the ability to manipulate and extract the drug. The physical properties of the pill can be used to make manipulation much more difficult, such as providing a drug that cannot be altered without neutralizing the opioid compounds, or a chemical can be included that counteracts the euphoric effect of the opioid if the drug is manipulated, either by grinding or by heating it, making the drug useless to street providers.

● (1115)

In June 2014, our previous Conservative government provided a notice of intent to industry. We announced that new regulations were coming that would require tamper-resistant formulations of specific controlled substances such as oxycodone. The intent of the former Conservative government was to reduce the diversion of opioids for illicit purposes to keep them off the streets. Sadly, the current government chose to overturn this decision, which has now had failed consequences on Canadians from coast to coast.

One youth who I had the chance to talk to in my riding took the opportunity to brag to me that he was taking his prescription drugs and selling them for \$25 a pill. His chronic pain allows him lifetime access to these pills and it now serves as his main source of income.

Diverting these drugs to the illegal markets can be stopped. If we can stop this illicit secondary market for illegal pharmaceuticals, it will decrease one of the sources that make these street drugs so accessible.

I will be the first to admit that this is a complex issue and that this one change will not solve the entire problem. There are a whole host of changes required in order to stop opioids from ending up on our streets. Canada's physicians need to overhaul prescribing practices for opioids. Reducing the number of people with legal access to these drugs will also decrease the number of Canadians using illegal alternatives after their prescriptions end.

Private Members' Business

Furthermore, I am pleased to note that the government has taken a recommendation from Conservative members to now allow the Canada Border Services Agency to check packages smaller than 30 grams. This decision came out of a report that was written by health committee. The fact that this could not be done before allowed an unlimited supply of fentanyl to be mailed in small packages and enter our country so it could be sold on the street market.

I am also pleased the Liberals listened to health committee on the need to regulate pill press machines. These machines allow the toxic and deadly mishmash of chemicals in these street drugs to be pressed into professional-looking products that can easily be packaged and shipped. The new import controls on pill press machines is a good start, although more could be done.

Finally, we need to tackle the source of this problem at the root, which is the lack of treatment options for those who suffer from mental health problems. This makes them susceptible to using street drugs in the first place.

If the ongoing mental health crisis is allowed to continue in our city cores, on our reserves, and in our schools and universities, the drug crisis in our country will only continue to grow. The money in budget 2017 with regard to this issue is a good start, but a national strategy and further initiative is a must when it comes to mental health care in Canada.

Whether it is fentanyl, crystal meth, or the next street drug that is easily produced and cheap to buy, at the heart of all of these drug uses, this epidemic that we face, are people who are emotionally hurting. This is why the human face of this epidemic is so heartbreaking to acknowledge. These are vulnerable people who have chosen drugs because they do not have the support and necessary tools to take on life.

This is why I ask all members of the House to understand the further pain that opioids cause to Canadian families and to individuals. I ask members opposite to support this important legislation, Bill C-307.

● (1120)

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to private member's Bill C-307, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. However, before I address the issues, it is a very special day for me. My son, Alexander Oliver, and his very good friend, Tiana Prince, have joined me in Ottawa. It is great to have them in our capital city with me for a few days.

The intent of Bill C-307 is to enable the federal Minister of Health to require prescription medicine, specifically opioids, to have abuse-deterrent formulations or tamper-proof, tamper-resistant properties. By doing so, it will make these drugs more difficult to crush, snort, or inject, reduce their potential for misuse, abuse, and diversion to our streets.

I strongly agree with the sponsor of the bill when he said that this issue was about public health, about saving lives and doing the right thing. Canadians are the second-highest consumers of prescription opioids in the world. Fifteen per cent of Canadians aged 15 years and older report using prescription opioids in 2013. It is estimated that about 10% of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain become addicted. Furthermore, the increased availability of prescription

opioids in households has meant that Canadian youth have begun using them for recreational purposes. Six per cent of youth aged 15 to 19 years indicated they abused opioid pain relievers in the past year.

These trends result in significant harms. In Ontario, one in eight deaths of individuals aged 25 to 34 years was found to be opiate-related in 2010. Similarly, there has been a substantial increase in the number of opioid-related deaths in Quebec, reaching almost three deaths per 100,000 persons in 2012.

The response to the crisis by the government has been rapid, and I am pleased to see an evidence-based, health centric focus on harm reduction return to our health policy and legislation.

The Minister of Health has already responded to the crisis through a five-point action plan that includes better informing Canadians about the risks of opioids; supporting better prescribing practices; reducing easy access to unnecessary opioids; supporting better treatment options for patients; and improving the evidence base and data collection. The minister also convened a two-day pan-Canadian conference on opioid abuse in November 2016, which generated many of the changes that were introduced to the House in Bill C-37.

Further, the Standing Committee on Health, which I am proud to be a member of, issued a comprehensive report and recommendations on the opioid crisis on December 12, 2016. In the committee study, the issue of tamper-resistant technologies did not emerge as a preventive strategy. During the course of its study, the committee held five meetings, in which it heard from a range of stakeholders, including federal and provincial government representatives, health care professionals, addiction experts, emergency front-line responders, representatives of first nations communities, and individuals with lived experience in substance abuse and addiction. These witnesses outlined specific ways to address the opioid crisis and implored the committee to make recommendations that would lead to concrete action.

The 38 recommendations focused on harm reduction; prevention, including training for physicians in prescribing practices and public education; treatment, including addiction treatment and improved access to mental health services; and law enforcement and border security changes. Tamper-resistance formulations were never documented in witness testimonies as an effective strategy.

Let me expand on this point.

One of the debate points over the proposed change to the law in Bill C-307 is about whether an explicit legislative authority is needed to require certain drugs to have tamper-resistant formulations. The government's position is that the current regulation-making authorities under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act are sufficient already to develop regulations should the evidence demonstrate a need for them in the future. From this point of view, Bill C-307 is unnecessary.

Private Members' Business

Further, nothing in Bill C-307 would speed up that regulation-making process. The sponsor of Bill C-307 outlined many tamper-resistance technologies currently under development. The government strongly supports opioid manufacturers who wish to take proactive measures to make their medications harder to abuse. That is why it recently published guidance to drug manufacturers on what evidence was required to demonstrate tamper-resistant properties for prescription drugs.

It is also clearly the sponsor's view that the technology has been sufficiently developed in the area of tamper resistance and there is enough real-life evidence of positive outcomes to move forward with regulations. I would disagree.

• (1125)

First, tamper resistance has not been shown to reduce the rate of addiction, overdose, and death related to opioid misuse. Remember, a tamper-resistant opioid is still an opioid. Based on current evidence it is no less dangerous and no less addictive. Data from the United States and Ontario shows that opioid-related deaths continued to increase even after the introduction of reformulated OxyContin to the market. Further, as I stated earlier, this strategy was not recommended by the many experts from whom the health committee heard testimony.

Second, only a small number of people who misuse OxyContin pills crush them or dissolve them; most simply swallow them. Roughly a quarter of those who were misusing OxyContin before the tamper-resistant version was marketed continued to do so after its introduction. They did so by moving from inhaling or injecting the drug to, again, simply swallowing them. A sizeable population defeated the tamper-resistant properties, with information on how to do this available on the internet. Of course, those who misused by swallowing OxyContin continued to swallow reformulated OxyContin. Tamper resistance does not mean tamper-proof.

Third, tamper-resistant technology is not sufficiently developed to cover the entire class of opioids, some of which come in the forms of patches, sprays, or injectable liquids.

Fourth, and perhaps most important to me, the introduction of tamper-resistant technology seems to only reduce the abuse of one type of drug in exchange for another. The most common response to the introduction of reformulated OxyContin in the United States was migration to other drugs, including heroin and fentanyl. In the case of tamper resistance, it can result in a substitution or balloon effect. Studies already have found that prescriptions for hydromorphone and fentanyl increased in Ontario after the province restricted access to OxyContin, suggesting a substitution effect could be happening in Canada already.

Members are, of course, all aware of the deadly impacts of the current surge in fentanyl-related overdose deaths in Canadians. Because of the high demand for this drug, organized crime groups began importing illegal fentanyl as analogs from China. These are then transformed into tablet forms in clandestine labs in Canada, using pill presses and disguised as other opioids, such as OxyContin. The unknown potency of illegal fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, coupled with the fact the users are often unaware that they are taking illegally manufactured pills, has resulted in a dramatic increase in illicit drug deaths in Canada.

British Columbia has become the epicentre of the crisis. The percentage of drug deaths involving fentanyl increased from 5% in 2012 to 60%. In 2016, with the involvement of fentanyl doubling the rates of drugs in the province, British Columbia experienced approximately 60 deaths a month by August 2016 from illicit drug use.

We do not want to make uninformed policy decisions that could increase the substitution of OxyContin to illegal fentanyl. The substitution effect can also lead to higher risks of administration, such as injection, which is associated with the spread of hepatitis and increased risk of overdose.

I want the residents of my riding of Oakville to be protected from the opioid crisis and illicit fentanyl distribution. I want all Canadians to be protected from misuse of opioids. I have been meeting to discuss addiction and prevention with key agencies in Oakville, including the medical officer of health, service providers at the Halton Alcohol Drug And Gambling Assessment Prevention and Treatment Services, ADAPT, and, most recently, with the Halton chief of police, Steve Tanner. Tamper-proof has not come up.

I applaud the sponsor of Bill C-307 for the attempt to help address this crisis, but for the reasons stated above, I do not believe the bill would change the government's ability to respond to the crisis. Nor do I believe evidence-based research supports the underlying position taken by the bill.

Finally, I do not think the bill would help the vulnerable and at-risk people in Oakville.

For these reasons, I will not be supporting Bill C-307.

• (1130)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the private member's bill from my colleague, the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, Bill C-307. This is a bill to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and is intended to save lives.

The intent of this bill is to enable the federal minister of health to require specific controlled substances or class of controlled substances to have "abuse-deterrent formulations" and/or "tamper-resistant properties". This will make these pharmaceutical substances more difficult to abuse.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-307 will make it possible for Canada's health minister to take immediate action whenever Canadians are being hurt or killed by a specific drug. We can do something, one thing, to help keep Canadians safe. We can do something when it becomes apparent that there is a deadly narcotic substance available that we no longer want available in its current form because it is dangerous and can be too easily abused. We can do something, by supporting Bill C-307. While this bill can apply to any substance under the two categories of drugs in the health legislation, this bill may in fact only be implemented on rare occasions, and yet it will help Canada's minister of health take swift action to save lives and prevent terrible suffering.

The government does have opposition to Bill C-307. In the previous hour of debate on November 17, 2016, Canadians learned of the Liberal government's initial response to Bill C-307, and we were disappointed. However, we hope that following today's second hour of debate, the Liberal government will agree to support sending this bill to committee for further study and consideration.

I want to address the reasons for opposing Bill C-307 from the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health. I want to remind everyone that abuse-deterrent and tamper-resistant technologies across the class of opioid medications are only one tool among many others to combat prescription opioid abuse.

Crushing and snorting of these powerful narcotics is often the gateway to other forms of abuse, including pill-popping and the movement to more dangerous illicit substances, such as fentanyl, carfentanil, W-18 and U-47700, especially for young Canadians. I am hopeful that we would do everything in our power to stem this tide.

Would all drugs be required to be tamper resistant? No, this bill will not result in only tamper-resistant drugs being available in the Canadian market. This is precisely the point. The United States is leading the way and moving forward to provide Americans with many drugs in a tamper-resistant form. This movement is supported by the Federal Food and Drug Administration, the DEA, and the Trump administration. Seven medications with tamper-resistant or abuse-deterrent formulations, with more to come, are now approved in America.

The parliamentary secretary did not report much of the growing body of evidence to this House in her speech during the first hour of debate. The speech she delivered did include references to a selective literature review on the benefits and risks of abuse-deterrent formulation, tamper-resistant medications.

The recently concluded health committee hearings and the opioids conference did not hear from all stakeholders, including actual pain patients taking these abuse-deterrent formulation, tamper-resistant medications; representatives from the industrial producers of abuse-deterrent formulation, tamper-resistant medications; nor any international and independent experts in the field of abuse deterrence. There is more consultation needed by the government. In fact, the health minister's public statements often acknowledge the value of wide consultation, and it is one of the orders in her mandate letter from the Prime Minister.

The government's opposition to Bill C-307 expressed by the parliamentary secretary did not follow another instruction to the

Minister of Health in her mandate letter from the Prime Minister. That directive asks the minister to provide Canadians with science and evidence-based approaches to inform public policy. There is strong scientific confirmation of tamper-resistance technology and abuse-deterrent formulations. There are no maybes or guesswork about these technologies. They work. Tamper-resistance and abuse-deterrent formulation technology is here to stay. It is sound science. It is the future.

Increasingly, powerful medications will be available in the protected forms contained in Bill C-307. Someday, all powerful medications will be released to the public in these forms. These technologies are a product of the scientific advances of the western pharmaceutical technology. Doctors want to prescribe to their patients medications that will not harm them. Doctors want to prescribe to their patients medications that patients cannot hurt themselves with, even if they try.

• (1135)

Patients want their doctors to prescribe them medications that will not hurt them, even if they make a mistake while trying to follow the instructions on the prescription. Everyone wants prescriptive medications that cannot be cut up, crushed, and sold as drugs to be abused.

We can do this now. The technology does exist. We can protect ourselves and others right now. Someday our society will be able to protect our population from the risks and the harmful effects of strong medications that are being abused. This technology will be widespread and used on virtually all potentially harmful medications.

Bill C-307 proposes to provide our Minister of Health with the power to name a single substance and declare it unavailable to Canadians unless and until it is in a tamper-resistant or abuse-deterrent formulation. This would save lives every time that we find a particular substance is being abused with deadly results. The health minister could invoke this tool immediately and stop the loss of lives and terrible suffering at any time.

We have seen numerous drugs, one at a time it seems, being the latest drug of choice to abuse. Some of them are producing deadly results in large numbers. With the passage of Bill C-307, we could stop any of the newest drugs from being available for abuse. We could demand that they are only made available in a tamper-resistant or abuse-deterrent formulation.

There is a question of costs, and the concerns about the possible increase in costs for public and private payers of medications with abuse-deterrent and tamper-resistant formulations have been addressed. The introduction of these products in the United States and Canada has been shown to drive down prescription volumes for these medicines. The result is that the costs remain the same, not higher.

Private Members' Business

Again, the parliamentary secretary did not provide us with the evidence of this fact; she reported that her government continues to be concerned about costs. However, the cost issue has been addressed, with evidence. There needs to be more up-to-date research on the facts and figures concerning the deployment of medications with both abuse-deterrent and/or tamper-resistant properties.

The federal government and the provinces have every cost-containment tool at their disposal today to rein in drug costs. The highly successful pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance is a very effective alliance that operates to set the best prices for public pharmaceutical plans. In turn, the work of the alliance also affects, and sometimes dictates, the prices in private plans. This system ensures that patients are getting medicines at affordable levels.

The provinces and territories have the power of bulk buying. There are numerous examples of medications available at reasonable costs and even lower costs following negotiations between governments and producers. The pharmaceutical firms can employ scale pricing if they know they will realize specific large numbers of sales over specific time frames. This common marketplace practice accommodates the costs to the consumer and makes abuse-deterrent and tamper-resistant medications available and affordable.

I remind all members of the House that every single opioid molecule known to medical science is already off patent. Regulations designed in the previous Parliament make it clear that any company can bring in a competing technology to any abuse-deterrent medication.

I am reminded frequently of the use of the term that we do not need 99 reasons for why we cannot do something, we only need one reason for why we can. This is one reason for why we can work to save lives across this country, by adopting Bill C-307.

● (1140)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak today to Bill C-307, and about the great work that has been done by my colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot. As someone who has spent a great deal of time with young people as an educator for 34 years, I have seen the effects and the terrible things that happen because of drugs. I do not think there is anybody in this House who is unaffected by that same type of damage. When we know there is something out there that could possibly help, this is critical. With the opportunities that young people have when they get hold of drugs, and the partying and other stuff that ties into it, we realize that the damage hurts many families.

The intent of Bill C-307 is to enable the federal minister of health to require specific controlled substances or classes of controlled substances to have either abuse-deterrent formulations, ADFs, and/or tamper-resistant, TR, properties. This bill would make these pharmaceutical substances more difficult to abuse and would make it possible for Canada's health minister to take immediate action whenever Canadians are being hurt or killed by a specific drug. Bill C-307 would help keep Canadians safe when it is determined that a particularly deadly narcotic substance that is available in its current form is too dangerous and can too easily be abused. While Bill C-307 could apply to any substances under the two categories of

drugs in the health legislation, the provisions of this bill may in fact be implemented on rare occasions.

We are led to believe that the Liberals will someday announce a package of measures that they think will help combat the scourge of drug abuse in Canada. We also know that the Liberals are supporting legalized marijuana. I will have a lot to say about that in the future, again as someone who has seen the serious damage to families and young people that has taken place, especially to developing brains. We can only hope that when adopting this measure in Bill C-307, at a time in the future when the Liberals announce their further policies on drug abuse, maybe they will have something they can tie in to that. I heard one speaker earlier talking about discussions where there were a number of recommendations. We have to look at some of the other damages that exist as well, to find out exactly what is taking place.

Again, abuse-deterrent and tamper-resistant technologies across the class of opioid medication is only one tool among many others that are there to combat prescription drug abuse. Bill C-307 would do something to prevent the ability to crush, snort, or ingest powerful narcotics that have been taken from pills, patches, or sprays prescribed by doctors. We hear disturbing things about some prescriptions and how they get into the hands of young people, and into the hands of older people as well. Sometimes the drugs are being sold because people would sooner be in pain and get money for their drugs. They know that there will be problems down the line. These are the kinds of abuses that we constantly see.

This kind of drug abuse becomes a gateway to other forms of abuse, including pill-popping and taking too many pills in order to get high at parties. It becomes like a Russian roulette as to what people will take. Abusing drugs that are available from doctors or pharmacies also leads to abuse of more dangerous illicit substances, as has been mentioned before, such as fentanyl, carfentanil, W-18, and U-47700, especially by young Canadians.

Passing Bill C-307 into law would result in tamper-resistant drugs being available in the Canadian market. However, these are only drugs that we discover are being easily and widely abused. They could be identified by the minister of health and taken off the shelves until they are manufactured with tamper-resistant or abuse-deterrent properties. I believe that people who are in the business of making sure that drugs are safely presented to Canadians would be able to deal with this and be more than pleased to help in protecting young people, and all people who seem to have gone off the rails in this particular area.

● (1145)

We have heard a great deal of rhetoric and slogans and we have heard the review of newspaper clippings by Liberal MPs who have spoken against Bill C-307, but we have not heard any better ideas than what is proposed in Bill C-307. We have not heard support for research into tamper resistance. We have not heard the Liberals pursue Bill C-307 as part of their innovation strategy. I imagine the current Liberal government is searching for ways to spend billions of taxpayers' dollars or borrowed money on innovation, so here would certainly be an opportunity.

Private Members' Business

At the same time, in a very few laboratories in Canada and the United States, teams of scientists are working to make these pills and patches and sprays tamper-proof, and they are succeeding. They are all going to tell us that they may need more money and more funding so the research can be accelerated and expanded. They want to go faster and someday have many of the more powerful medications that a doctor would prescribe either difficult to abuse or impossible to abuse. Canada could be leading the way on the conversion of some of these drugs to a completely safe state.

The government needs to get to work. Canadians want to hear from acute pain patients taking these ADF and TR medications, from representatives from the industrial producers of ADF and TR medications, and from international and independent experts in the field of abuse deterrence. This is one of the critical and important things that we have to be aware of. More consultation needs to be done by the government. Instead, it seems bent on simply voting down Bill C-307 and abandoning the wealth of opportunities that this field of medicine can provide.

Canadians are being hurt and killed by drugs that are available, drugs that can be broken into and abused in such a way as to cause overdoses. We could prevent that. The Liberals do not want this. All of this anti-recreational drug talk is boring to the Liberals. They have better things to do with billions of borrowed dollars than to help prevent death and serious injury from the abuse of drugs. They are more concerned about legalizing marijuana.

We hear terrible stories of house parties where someone hands out crystals crushed from pills to young people, who try it. Some might get really sick or go into trauma, and hopefully someone calls 911. Most often, though, we hear about these deaths the next morning. Having seen and recognized how serious this can be, people realize that something has to be done.

In the health minister's mandate letter from the Prime Minister, she is told to consult with Canadians. That directive asks the minister to provide Canadians with science- and evidence-based approaches to form public policy.

There is strong scientific confirmation of tamper-resistant technology and abuse-deterrent formulations. The minister should get to work and put Canadians to work developing this field of science in order to protect our children from the powerful medications prescribed by our doctors and found in our medicine cabinets. Whether the government agrees to help or not, powerful medication will be available increasingly in the protected forms contained in Bill C-307. Someday all powerful medications will be released to the public in these forms.

I hope enough Liberal backbenchers will show backbone and vote in support of Bill C-307 so that it can be sent to committee for further study. I hope enough Liberal MPs do not listen to the dictates from the PM and the health minister and will vote in support of Bill C-307. These brave MPs will be able to tell their constituents that they at least tried to save the lives of young folks who are getting hurt or killed by abusing drugs that are already at home and in the family medicine cabinet. The supporters of Bill C-307 will be able to hold their heads high when they go home, because they will have tried to convince their government to do the right thing.

Everyone should get behind this effort. It is just one thing, but these things add up. They save lives and they prevent suffering.

● (1150)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House and have the final say in debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-307.

The creation of my private member's bill came about from having a wife and a daughter who are registered nurses. Especially, my daughter came to me and said, "Dad, something has to be done." I live in a small rural riding where we typically do not believe we have the same problems, difficulties, and issues that are faced in cities such as Vancouver, which we heard the member of Parliament talk about this morning, but the issue of prescription and illicit drug abuse has touched every riding in our country.

This is an issue that we all face in the communities we represent as hon. members of Parliament. It is an issue that has ravaged some communities, destroyed families, and has taken far too many lives. Most tragically, it has taken a disproportionate number of lives from young and indigenous Canadians.

I listened as the New Democratic member of Parliament from Vancouver stated that 20,000 people in Canada have died from opioid abuse over the years. There were 156 call-outs in that one community in Vancouver to the fire department or to 911 dealing predominantly with fentanyl and opioid abuse. Canadians expect that we would respond to numbers and issues like that.

Can any member of the House forget the headline on September 17, 2016, in the *National Post*, which read: "Eight overdoses in 13 minutes and one devastated suburb"? That article stated that they did not have enough responders to get out to the various eight overdoses in that span of 13 or 15 minutes. It was one small-time drug dealer who contaminated a batch of cocaine he made with fentanyl that caused the tragedy. The alleged dealer said that he had no idea what he had done.

Right now—and I do not even have it printed out yet—the CBC is carrying a story. In New Brunswick, an individual's former physician—and they name the individual—is being charged with drug trafficking. It is alleged the 35-year-old doctor wrote prescriptions for 50,000 OxyContin and OxyNEO pills, picked them up herself, and did not give them to the patients.

We have a crisis in the country. Emergency responders know that when there is a fentanyl overdose, they use naloxone to save the lives of victims, but in this case we do not know where those 50,000 pills were going.

The Budget

Tragically, as we have already heard this morning, far too often when we open the papers in the morning—especially in British Columbia and the west, but more and more across into the east—the papers are reporting the deaths of those who have used a drug without knowing that it had been laced with something like fentanyl. Bill C-307 would help prevent so-called dealers from breaking into medication that is available to Canadians from pharmacies. It would prevent these clandestine drug manufacturers from adding the active ingredients from prescription drugs to another drug and causing them to be deadly. The bill would give the health minister the power to quickly act and remove some of these from their availability to people who would abuse them.

No one should be using drugs, yet we live in a society where peer pressure, life stresses, and many other factors cause people to abuse drugs. These people do not factor in the possibility of dying when they try those drugs.

It is time that Parliament responded.

● (1155)

Let me end by saying this. The Liberal government said in the last budget that it was going to have an innovation budget. These are exactly the things that happen when research and development goes out with innovation money, looking at a problem, and asking whether it can be made abuse-deterrent, whether it can be made in a formulation that cannot be misused by those who get their hands on it. Therefore, I would encourage the governing party to allow the bill to go to committee—not to make it law today, but at least to allow the bill to go to committee, where it can be studied and the benefits of this measure can be seen.

I thank every member of Parliament for their consideration of this bill. I encourage everyone to support it Wednesday evening, allow the committee to do some work on it, and report back.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 5, 2017, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: The House will suspend until 12 noon. (The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:58 a.m.)

● (1200)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House,

(a) the recorded division on the amendment to the motion for third reading of Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, scheduled to take place today, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, be further deferred to Tuesday, April 4, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions provided that all questions necessary for the disposal of the third reading stage of Bill be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment pursuant to Order made Monday, March 20, 2017, under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3).

(b) the subamendment and the amendment in relation to Ways and Means motion No. 10 be disposed of as follows:

On Tuesday, April 4, 2017, at 1:59 p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings, the question to dispose of the subamendment shall be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions that day;

On Tuesday, April 4, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings, the question to dispose of the amendment shall be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions on Wednesday, April 5, 2017.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 23 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the question, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the House of Commons had used three minutes of his time.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to add some thoughts on what is a very important day. It is yet another day on which we recognize a budget that further advances what Canadians voted for just under 18 months ago.

What I would like to do is offer a bit of reflection. I think of where we were two years ago. At that time, people were wanting to see change. What they recognized was that the Conservative Party, under Stephen Harper, had lost touch with what Canadians really wanted to see happen. The New Democratic Party, I believe, got it wrong. We saw that in its policy of having a balanced budget. What Canadians wanted to hear from a political entity was what the Liberal Party was talking about. We wanted to see an investment in Canada and in Canadians to deal with the issue of Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it. Time and time again, when I was talking with individuals, what they wanted was a sense of hope and a leader who would speak to them and listen to what they had to say.

The Prime Minister continues to ask members of Parliament to reach into their constituencies and to represent their constituents here in Ottawa, as opposed to representing Ottawa to their constituents. My colleagues in the Liberal caucus take that to heart. They believe that at the end of the day, we are here to represent the interests of our constituents. It is something we take very seriously. We continuously bring those ideas and concerns to our standing committees, to the floor of the House, to our caucus, to the numerous committees and subcommittees established through our caucus, and even to the evening events we attend, because we genuinely believe that the way we can continue to build a healthier and stronger Canada is to reflect the interests and will of the constituents we represent.

I want to provide an overview for the simple reason that if we look at everything that has occurred in the last 18 months, in comparison to the previous Stephen Harper government, there has been a significant amount of progress on a series of files. That can be clearly demonstrated. Canadians wanted real change, and they got real change. We have seen that change implemented in many ways and highlighted through our budgets.

It was literally weeks after the election that we heard about the importance of giving the middle-class tax break. That was one of the first pieces of legislation brought to the House, the tax break for Canada's middle class. We understood that there needed to be a sense of fairness. That is why we saw the 1% of Canada's wealthiest taxed a little more and Canada's middle class given a substantial tax break. We understood that there are many individuals who are aspiring to be a part of that middle class and many individuals who needed that helping hand. We saw that in the first budget.

We saw increases in things such as the guaranteed income supplement. That was a substantial increase, to the tune of hundreds of dollars. I believe it is just in excess of \$900 for some of the very poorest of Canada's seniors, many of whom actually live within the riding I represent. As I have said on many occasions, that initiative lifted literally tens of thousands, many of whom are from Winnipeg North, out of poverty situations.

•(1205)

We have talked a great deal about the Canada child benefit program, a program that, again, has lifted tens of thousands out of poverty. I am being conservative with those numbers. We could argue that hundreds of thousands of children have actually been lifted out of poverty because of that initiative.

Those are the types of things we are reinforcing and building upon in this budget. Those are the types of initiatives that have allowed Canadians to have more money in their pockets, increasing disposable income. We understand that a healthy middle class is good for all Canadians. The middle class and those aspiring to be part of it cultivate the economy and feed job growth. The more we build on the middle class, the more we will have a robust economy. I believe that the two have been moving forward quite significantly.

About two weeks ago, we heard some of the numbers and some of the trends. I am always a little cautious in regard to the numbers, but there was one that really stuck out: almost 220,000 jobs have been created in a six-month period. That is an incredible amount of growth in jobs, and most were full-time jobs. In fact, we will likely find that it is higher than in any time frame of six months in the previous decade. I believe that is, in good part, proof that things are moving forward.

Canadians understood that we needed to see a tangible investment in our economy, and what is better than to invest in Canada's infrastructure. This budget continues to reinforce what we presented last year, with a record amount of money, an historical amount of money, being invested in our infrastructure.

Just the other day I was reading a release that stated that the Province of Ontario, through infrastructure and transit, literally has about 200 different projects moving forward dealing with transit issues. Last year there was a desire to move quickly because of the Fort McMurray fire and the economy of Alberta.

I applaud the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities who has done a fantastic job of reaching out to the provinces and municipalities to identify the types of projects we can start acting on, all of which are important. Whether it is transit or social infrastructure, it is absolutely critical that we start investing as soon as we can in terms of building Canadian infrastructure. We all benefit when that takes place.

I am very proud of the fact that we have a Prime Minister who has recognized the importance of Canada's infrastructure. By recognizing it, he has also added the dollars that are necessary to make a difference. This is part of listening to different stakeholders, in particular the different levels of government. Municipalities were crying for resources. They need the dollars to improve infrastructure. I am glad and very proud of the fact that the government is responding, like no other government, to the need for infrastructure dollars. I see that as very positive.

The Budget

●(1210)

We talk a lot about budgets and how we are using tax dollars, but it has gone beyond that in the last 18 months. I am very proud of the fact that we have a government, for the first time in many years, that understands that it has a strong national leadership role on important files, files Canadians want us to act on.

I would like to give a few examples. One is the CPP agreement. The CPP is one of those fundamental programs Canadians have grown to love and want to be there for them, whether it is today or in the years ahead. Our government actually moved forward in meeting with different provinces and territories and came to an agreement with our partners, which ultimately saw substantial increases in the CPP. That is about working with other governments. It also recognizes that decisions we make today impact people tomorrow. There will not be any immediate benefit per se, but in the long term, many workers in the workforce today will receive substantial increases when it comes to retirement, because this government made it a priority to change the CPP program and to work with the provinces.

In opposition, I called on the Harper government for years to work with the provinces to try to get an agreement. The Conservatives did not demonstrate any interest in that, and they were not able to ultimately deliver what I believe Canadians wanted to see.

We can talk about the price on pollution. The price on carbon is an interesting issue. When we had the conference on the environment in Paris, the Prime Minister and others attended. The Prime Minister came back indicating that Canada can and needs to play a leadership role. Shortly thereafter, provinces came on side, agreeing on the need to have a price on carbon. I thought it was really interesting that there were premiers of all political stripes, Conservative, New Democrat, and Liberal, and countries around the world that agreed that we needed to have a price on carbon. Only one real voice came out against it, which was the Conservative Party.

I made reference at the beginning of my speech to the Conservatives having lost touch with Canadians. This is a good example that highlights that the Conservatives are again out of touch with what Canadians truly want to see happen.

The price on pollution is needed, and the misinformation the Conservatives might try to convey is most unfortunate. What upsets me, to a certain degree, is that they try to give the impression that Ottawa generates revenue from this. This is, for the national government, revenue neutral. Ottawa is not getting a dime from the price on carbon. In fact, all it demonstrates is that Ottawa and this Prime Minister recognize the need to demonstrate leadership on this file, and that is the reason we have a universal, pan-Canada approach on this issue.

I have made reference in the past to the importance of health care to all Canadians. It is an issue on which Canadians identify themselves as being Canadian. They have a sense of pride in our health care system. As a former health care critic in the province of Manitoba, I think there is a great deal of room for improvement, especially in the management of health care, but what I recognize, and I recognized even back then, is that Ottawa has to play a role.

That role goes beyond just handing over dollars. I am so proud of the fact that we have a Minister of Health who recognizes that.

For all Canadians, we now have a health care accord, with the exception of one province. Unfortunately, it is my home province that has not quite signed on, but I applaud all of those involved in making that happen, because I know it is important, not only to this government but to Canadians, and that is why it is important to this government.

●(1215)

We have a minister dealing with trade who is doing a phenomenal job working with his counterparts. We are very optimistic that we will see some sort of agreement on trade. The trade file has been really important to this government. We saw it with the World Trade Organization legislation. It involves dozens of countries around the world, and makes trade that much better for Canada. We saw it with the trade agreement with Ukraine, which was signed off by this Prime Minister. There is the incredible work done by the former minister responsible for international trade in getting CETA across the line. That is so critically important.

The bottom line is that this government has recognized how important trade is to Canada. Canada is a trading nation. We are very dependent on going outside of our borders. What we will find in the 2017 budget are initiatives which, much like in the 2016 budget, promote and encourage our companies to look at exporting to expand opportunities, because the more we engage in trade, the more opportunities there will be for Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it.

Trade equals jobs. This government understands that and is working progressively to deal and to deliver. We have seen many announcements in different regions of our country that will further advance all Canadians.

I am proud to have had the opportunity to represent the constituents of Winnipeg North in speaking to what I believe they would say is a budget that delivers in a very tangible way.

●(1220)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those were a lot of flowery words. There are a lot of flowery words in the budget as well. It is quite painful to actually go through it and think about the implications of the government's budgetary policy: more high deficits, no control on spending, no recognition of the reality that ultimately we have to pay for all the things the budget talks about.

I want to ask a specific question, because we heard a lot of generalities. One of the weirder things about this budget is that on page 64, it is getting tough on volunteers. It is trying to combat this scourge of people volunteering in the form of so-called unpaid internships. This budget talks about trying to eliminate unpaid internships unless they are part of a formal education program.

I want to ask the member if he has ever had unpaid volunteers in his office, and if he has, if he will repent right away.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first let me address the member's comments with respect to the whole fiscal aspect of governance.

The Budget

I like to believe that history, which is fairly factual, will demonstrate that the Liberal Party of Canada while in government has demonstrated more fiscal capabilities than have the Progressive Conservative Party and today's Conservative Party. That can be best illustrated by indicating that when former prime minister Harper actually became prime minister, he inherited a multi-billion dollar surplus. Even before the world recession kicked in, he turned that surplus into a deficit situation. He never returned Canada to a balanced budget, contrary to what many of the Conservatives would like to tell us.

With respect to internship programs, I think whenever and wherever we can look at having interns in a paid position, that is a positive thing, and I am sure the member would agree.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in July 2015, the Liberal Party was campaigning on balancing the budget. In September 2015, the leader of the Liberal Party then told Canadians that if elected, a Liberal government would run three modest \$10-billion deficits and then balance the budget in year four. In 2016, the Liberals got into power and we see six straight deficits, starting with about \$30 billion in the first year alone. Now the finance department is saying that at this rate, we may never balance the budget until 2050.

Canadians know that the Liberals promised that the 2015 election would be the last one under first past the post, and they have abandoned that position.

They also told Canadians that we needed to borrow money to build infrastructure. They got into office, and now they are telling Canadians we are going to have to sell public infrastructure, such as ports, airports, etc.

During the election campaign, they attacked the New Democrats' child care plan for being not ambitious enough. They got into power and now they are going to spend a fraction of what the New Democrats were proposing to spend.

When the hon. member says that the Liberals campaigned on real change, did he really mean that the Liberals were going to change all of their positions once they got into government, which is what they have done?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised that the member would ask a question on anything related to the balancing of books given what the NDP's commitment to Canadians was. I am not too sure in terms of where the New Democrats stand today on the issue of balanced budgets, but what I do know is that Canadians understood that the government needed to be able to invest in the economy and needed to invest in Canadians. That is what the Prime Minister said and reflected during the last election campaign. We made a commitment to do just that, to invest in Canada.

The New Democrats on the other hand said something to the effect that no matter what the circumstances, they would balance the budget. Had they actually prevailed, heaven forbid, and formed government, what would they have cut? Where would the billions of dollars have been saved? Day after day, I hear New Democrats say to spend more and more. I never hear them say to cut from here or from there. They are inconsistent with what they said during the last election campaign when they pledged that they would have a balanced budget. That was highly irresponsible. I do not think there

would be a credible economics professor in our land who would say that it was a responsible commitment that the New Democrats made.

• (1225)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it was Andrew Coyne of the *National Post* who appropriately coined this budget as “bafflegab and buzzwords”. Ironically, he wrote that before he heard the hon. member speak today. I find it kind of humorous, as do the New Democrats, that the Liberals are actually questioning the need to balance budgets. I want to remind the member again that when the Liberal Party ran on balanced budgets, the Liberals said that they were going to run modest budget deficits, but they also said that the budget would be balanced by 2019. As it stands today, my 13-year-old will be 52 by the time the Liberals balance the budget. Hopefully, they will not be in power by that time.

I also want to remind the hon. member that his party is going to be incurring \$1.5 trillion in additional debt. How can the Liberals justify that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the cumulative debt that Stephen Harper put on Canadians was in excess of \$150 billion, billion with a capital B. When Stephen Harper took office, as I indicated earlier, he inherited a Liberal surplus of billions of dollars. I find it very difficult to appreciate advice on balancing budgets coming from the Conservative Party given its track record on the issue. The only governments that have ever balanced a budget in the last 30 or 40 years have actually been Liberal governments, consecutively, and that is the truth. It is difficult to answer a question about the need to balance budgets when the Conservatives, in particular Stephen Harper, never really experienced a balanced budget.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the importance of parliamentarians speaking up for their constituents, and that it is not Ottawa speaking to constituents but constituents speaking to Ottawa. I would like to give a message to the hon. member from the residents of Foothills and many others in Alberta. To eliminate the Canadian exploration expense, the Liberals are basically destroying the energy sector in Alberta. In eliminating the tax deferral for grain farmers, they are destroying the agriculture industry in Alberta. On the carbon tax, the residents of my constituency of Foothills were very clear. Ninety-five per cent of those who responded to a householder that I put out did not support a Liberal carbon tax. I want this message to be very clear for the Liberal government.

The member also mentioned that the Liberal government is not going to be making a dime off of the carbon tax. I would like to say that the Liberal government is charging GST on the carbon tax, so it is making money off of it. Is that right?

The Budget

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will reinforce what we have been able to accomplish. I pose the question for the members across the way. In terms of pipelines, which are so critically important to the Prairies, how many inches of pipeline did the Conservative Party produce that actually took it to tidewater? There was none, zero pipelines. Within 18 months, our government has been able to get some pipelines approved which are going to guarantee tens of thousands of jobs for the Prairies, and in fact, all of Canada. Many jobs will be created in the province of Ontario and other jurisdictions as a direct result of a government that was able to get the job done. The Conservatives were not able to get the job done.

The member made reference to the issue on wheat. Those members need to ask themselves what the wheat farmers had to say when the Conservative Party decided to attack the Canadian Wheat Board. I know what the prairie residents were saying, but I am not too sure if the member across the way does.

• (1230)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Fundamentally, budgets are about priorities and what our priorities are speak a lot about who we are, what we stand for, and what we value. The Liberal government was elected on an ambitious platform that promised “real change”. It has been almost a year and a half, and what have we seen? It is post-election and the rhetoric is still in full flight.

However, when it comes to matching the action to the rhetoric, unfortunately, for many hard-working Canadians, especially those struggling to make ends meet, budget 2017 falls short, way short.

After studying the budget documents, I will venture to say that what budget 2017 really offers to Canadians is a healthy dose of cynicism. Why? While the government is making grand statements about promising X millions for the next five years for this and Y million for the next 10 years for that, when we look at the details of the budget, we often will see these announcements have no funding attached to them in this fiscal year 2017-18.

In many instances, the money does not even flow until the pre-election period for 2019. Most glaringly, budget 2017 offers many zeroes for this budget's fiscal year under program spending that would help low-income and middle-class Canadians, while leaving expensive and regressive tax breaks for wealthy CEOs and giveaways to large corporations untouched.

Here is a short list of zeroes in budget 2017 for this fiscal year: working together to tackle homelessness, zero; improving air quality for Canadians, zero; targeting housing support for indigenous peoples not living on reserve, zero; supporting families through early learning and child care, zero; improving indigenous communities, zero; accelerating the replacement of coal generated electricity, zero; veterans emergency funds, zero; veterans and family well-being fund, zero. Instead of going after tax loopholes taking advantage of only by the few wealthiest Canadians, the government chose to eliminate the public transit tax credit.

One of my constituents, Kalev, wrote to me saying:

I am a constituent in your riding, renting a house with my partner...and three friends, all of whom work and/or go to school full time. I also work full time as a lawyer.

We gave birth to our son in late September, and it has been a wonderful, if challenging, experience. We have been fortunate to have the support of my [partner's] mother, who is able to assist two days a week, to give [my partner] a break and a chance to catch up on the precious little sleep available to new parents.

However, come summer, [my partner's] mother will be leaving the country to spend time with her own ailing father and [my partner] will need to get back to her graduate studies. To do this, we anticipate needing at least part time child care assistance, and let me tell you, the availability of these services is scant to non-existent.

Further to the lack of availability, the cost of even part time care...is likely to reach \$1000 a month...I am astounded, given that most of our lawmakers are parents themselves, that such a thin and inefficient system is in place to provide families with young children the support they need to get back to work, contributing to the tax-base and to their own well-being.

The Prime Minister was out self-promoting what a great job he was doing in child care. Let us be clear. Even though the situation is urgent for families like Kalev, budget 2017 provides exactly zero dollars in new funding for child care spaces. What is more, future funding for child care over the next decade is nowhere near adequate to fill the need for child care spaces, never mind that child care costs have risen by more than 8% in the last two years and could reach as high as \$1,600 a month per child in some cities. Real change he says? Not.

Let us turn to another area.

Canada is one of the only developed nations with a universal health care system that has no pharmacare plan. Despite promises of real change, the Liberal government has stuck to Harper's health budget plans and the meagre investment of over five years to lower drug costs is completely inadequate. Recent studies have shown that over 8% of Canadian seniors are not filling prescriptions because of the cost. It is important to know that this is not a phenomenon only experienced by older Canadians. I have met some of those individuals. Some are cutting their pills in half so they can “stretch” their medication. Others are taking their pills on alternate days.

• (1235)

I have met people with diabetes who are not using the strips to regularly check their blood sugar. Why? Because the strips are not covered by pharmacare and they cannot afford to buy them.

The lack of universal drug coverage puts the costs of many prescription drugs out of reach for too many Canadians.

Marianne wrote to me about someone with Parkinson's disease who is spending \$6,000 a year on drugs. Marianne tells me, “He is now 70 years old, and still working full time because he feels the cost of the drugs prevents him from being able to retire. At the same time, the stress from work is contributing to the progress of his disease. It is heartbreaking to watch this, and it's difficult to believe this is happening in Canada.”

The Budget

This is the reality on the ground for people who cannot afford their medication, but it does not have to be this way. If we ended tax giveaways to the ultra-rich, we could invest in a national pharmacare program. A national pharmacare program is better for patients and it keeps people out of the emergency room and long-term care beds. By the way, the cost of one night in a hospital in B.C. is approximately \$1,500. It is estimated that a national pharmacare program costs \$6 billion annually. Can we afford it? We can. If we choose to reduce the corporate welfare to big corporations with the corporate income tax, we could more than pay for a national pharmacare program.

I will now turn to another key issue.

Despite grand pronouncements of a new nation-to-nation relationship, the Liberal government has utterly failed to deliver for Canada's indigenous peoples in budget 2017. Most pressing are the needs of indigenous youth. Despite the fact that the House unanimously voted for the NDP motion on child welfare that called for an immediate injection of \$155 million to ensure the government complied with a ruling by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, just like the Harper administration the Liberal government continues to discriminate against indigenous children. Budget 2017 does not provide a dime to address this unacceptable injustice.

Dr. Cindy Blackstock made it very clear when she said:

There's nothing new in the budget for First Nations children and their families, in child welfare, or their implementation of the Jordan's Principle...even though they've been found out of compliance with legal orders to stop that inequality.

It's a moral issue: is Canada so broke that the finance minister and the Prime Minister have made a deliberate choice to discriminate against little kids?

Vancouver East has the third largest urban aboriginal population in Canada, and we care deeply about the plight of indigenous, Métis, and Inuit peoples on and off reserves.

This comment from Christine in my riding is not atypical:

My heart breaks when I think of Aboriginal people who are so desperate that they feel their only option is to end their own life - as a representative of East Van, I hope you will speak up and urge the government to send the assistance that is needed now, and continue the long-overdue work at stabilizing long-neglected Aboriginal communities.

On behalf of my constituents, I ask the Liberal government why big corporations are allowed to stash almost \$40 billion in offshore tax havens so they do not have to pay their fair share of taxes, which results in a loss of \$7 billion in taxes each year, but we cannot find \$155 million so indigenous children have the same access to education as non-indigenous children? What kind of people are we and what kind of world do we live in?

I would be remiss if I, as the representative of Vancouver East, did not touch on the missed opportunity to start a national housing strategy.

While the parliamentary secretary for housing promised \$20 billion for housing over 10 years during the election campaign, let me point out that the government actually only plans to spend \$8.3 billion over that same period, less than half of what it promised. To make matters worse, 90% of that funding will not actually be spent until after the next election.

Thousands of Canadians across the country are struggling to find affordable housing, and this is a real problem in my riding, yet the

Liberal government continues to kick the can down the road, making grand promises that are actually contingent on it winning another election.

Casey from my riding wrote, "If you don't want to build enough good, safe, community oriented, integrated subsidized housing, then why do you keep the CPP and welfare rates so low that we can't afford to live?" That is a good question.

• (1240)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's remarks. Having listened to some of the debate today, it is interesting to note that earlier a member of the NDP talked about the deficits the Liberals were running. The Conservatives have talked about the deficits. We do not want to run a deficit forever.

However, when that member got up, all she talked about was spending. We have to recognize in the House that not everything is done in the budget. To the point the member made on health care, we are in fact making progress on the health care issue in terms of the discussions and agreements we have developed with the provinces.

On seniors' housing, that is part of the agreement where the federal government has targeted money for the housing sector. Also rather than giving the money to the provinces for them to spend, the federal government has actually targeted that spending to go to mental health.

The last point I would make is on the national housing strategy. As the chair of the finance committee, and I agree with the member, there is a huge concern there. We do need a national housing strategy.

However, the budget goes some distance. It is not going to get there in a day, but we have laid out a long-term plan in the budget to reaching a national housing strategy. Would the member not agree that progress has been made in the budget for Canadians?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the member misses the point entirely.

My colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, raised the issue of the broken promises, and that is the point. The government continually breaks promises.

It made these grand promises during the election, saying that it was for real change. Then after the election, it was like it was all forgotten. The Liberals break election promise after election promise. That is the reality. Electoral reform comes to mind. Even on the issue around spending and the deficit, the Liberals promised during the election that they would balance the budget in the third year after the election. Of course we now know that is not the case. That is the point.

The Budget

In my speech I raised the issue of spending. Urgent spending is needed now by Canadians, by people who are homeless. If we look at the budget document, on page 151, it lists all the many zeroes, some of which I cited. Why do I say we need to spend now? Because people are desperate. That is the reality.

I did not just talk about spending. I talked about where we could find the money to fund these programs, which the Liberal government refuses to acknowledge, and that is to take the money from the ultra-rich, from the tax breaks and tax havens, from the big corporations that are reaping and getting corporate breaks from this government and the previous government. That is how we can fund these programs.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very clear and impassioned speech on areas where investments need to be made. I wonder if she could talk about what is missing from the budget for young people, who are the future of our nation, and why we should invest in them.

The government has also not made any investments in drug prevention programs, mental health care, or prevention of sexual violence against women and girls and other sexual abuse. How can the government abandon those young people?

The government is also abandoning first nations youth, as my colleague mentioned. They are suffering. We should be giving those young people the best possible chance to thrive and get involved in their communities as engaged citizens.

•(1245)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, it is rather shocking, looking at budget 2017-18, that with the opioid crisis going on in our communities, the government is refusing to acknowledge it and declare a national health emergency. People in my riding are dying.

The Prime Minister came to Vancouver East, did a photo op, and then he left. Where is the emergency funding for this in budget 2017? There is zero, no money attached to it.

I find it absolutely shocking. Why are we not calling shame on the government? I ask the Liberals members this. When you have overdoses in your ridings, what do you do? Are you calling for your government to put the money where it is needed?

In addition to that, it is not only about the emergency programs that are needed, but the government is actually reducing funding for treatment. How is that possible? How is that real? How is that real change?

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate, I bring to the attention of hon. members the long-held practice that we have in the chamber of trying to avoid the use of the words “you” or “yours”. Members should direct their comments and questions to the Chair. That keeps the debate in the House less personal, and frankly directed in a way that supports good comportment across the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must say that I am very disappointed with budget 2017, which the Liberals recently tabled. It does absolutely nothing to reduce the inequality between the poorest and most disadvantaged members of our society and big business, banks, and multinationals, which continue to rake in bigger and bigger profits. We speak out against that here every day.

The government must choose to make investments in key sectors for many Canadians, particularly youth. For example, as we have been saying for years, the government needs to crack down on tax havens. Billions of dollars are being sent elsewhere and cannot be retrieved, when that money could be invested in various social programs, for example.

Today, I am going to focus on several major issues: youth, the environment, and investments in rural areas. The government loves to talk about youth. It pats itself on the back for how well it listens to and helps young people. Unfortunately, employment and job insecurity remain problematic for them. The government has once again proposed only a few half measures.

Let us look more closely at budget 2017. It indicates that there will be an increase in student grants. This will give more part-time students with families and adult learners who go back to school access to this program. It is a good initiative but it does not do much to help today's students and graduates, particularly with regard to their debt. Canadians have accumulated nearly \$28 billion in debt. What is being done to reduce that?

I can already hear my Liberal colleagues giving us some line about how graduates will not have to pay back their debt until they are earning \$25,000, but there is a slight problem. That does nothing to help them with their debt. On the contrary, it leads them deeper into debt because one downside of this measure is that interest continues to be charged after the initial six-month grace period. Their debt will therefore continue to grow because of that interest. It is time for the government to get its head out of the sand and stop making money at students' expense.

As far as post-secondary education for indigenous students is concerned, the government's key announcement was a \$90-million increase in funding and some help for Indspire. Like the Canadian Federation of Students, we can applaud that increase, but there are two pieces of information missing. First, the federal government was already giving Indspire more than \$5 million in 2016. This is not new spending. Second, the 2% increase ceiling for post-secondary education for indigenous students has not been breached. While first nations youth are the fastest growing population in Canada, it seems absurd to me that the government is still limiting their access to post-secondary education. It is totally unfair and immoral.

The Budget

The government is taking one step forward and two steps back, and not just in education. Take for example investment in artificial intelligence and robotics, an area that offers significant opportunities for businesses and scientific progress. Why is the government not investing in studying the impact of robotics, considering that 40% of industrial jobs will disappear within 10 years?

What job prospects are there for young people of my generation and younger generations? What are the ethical and social repercussions of artificial intelligence? Do we need to change our laws accordingly? There is not a single word on this in the budget.

The government needs to put effective measures and rules in place to address the scourge of job insecurity. Budget 2017 reinforces job insecurity and denies government assistance to those who need it the most.

Also on the subject of youth, I want to talk about youth organizations. The government is again promising a youth service initiative. This time, it has given us a date, the fall of 2017, but no budget. Last year, there was no date, but there was a budget. What does this mean? What is the plan? What will this youth service initiative entail? No details have been provided. Maybe we will get both pieces of the puzzle in 2018.

Lastly, while there is more money for the youth employment strategy, youth organizations are still having a very hard time securing federal funding. Katimavik is a perfect example. Although there is no short-term help in the federal budget for youth organizations, Katimavik was saved at the eleventh hour two days after the budget was tabled, but it is safe only for this year because we do not know anything about the long-term budget.

• (1250)

Katimavik got a lot of media attention, but how many other youth organizations have had to close their doors for lack of federal support? Budget 2017 once again does nothing for society's most vulnerable, for on-the-ground organizations such as youth centres and shelters. There is nothing for young people trying to escape difficult situations at home. There is no extra money in this budget for front-line mental health organizations working to prevent drug addiction and crime. The Conservative government cut that off long ago, and there is nothing for that kind of work in this budget. These organizations are running on empty.

Even so, the federal government decided to give even more money to businesses through measures like investment in infrastructure privatization. The same thing happened with the environment. In early March, the Senate released a report stating that there is no way Canada can comply with the Paris agreement without a massive shift in energy production and consumption.

What is more, last week Environment Canada confirmed that Canada will not meet the minimum target set by the Harper government, which was a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Even worse, emissions are going to increase. The report also indicates that the fossil fuel sector's greenhouse gas emissions are too great to be offset by a simple increase in the production of clean energy.

What did the Liberal government do? It approved three new pipelines and has not yet announced the reform of the National

Energy Board or environmental assessments. Even worse, Canada continues to provide more than \$4 billion in subsidies to oil and gas companies. The United Kingdom, however, has decreased its emissions dramatically primarily by intervening in its most polluting sector, coal-fired power. Canada still prefers to continue to ignore the sector that is its largest polluter.

I also share the concerns expressed by Équiterre, which questioned the lack of details on and criteria for green investment in budget 2017. Criteria that are too vague will diminish the real capacity to reduce polluting emissions.

Sidney Ribaux, executive director of Équiterre, summed up the need to invest in a real change in lifestyle. He said, "...we must fund mobility solutions that maximize GHG emissions reduction such as preferring electric transportation instead of petroleum based ones."

I would like to thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, who is working toward that goal.

Once again, the government had very little to say about agriculture in budget 2017 even though the agri-food business is vital and accounts for one in eight Canadian jobs. Farmers want to find better ways to farm that are environmentally sound, so I am pleased to see some investment in agricultural science and innovation.

Mathieu Rouleau is a young constituent of mine and an agriculture advocate who pointed out that details about the \$70-million investment are scarce. Who will get the money? How will it be allocated? How is the government investing in the next generation of farmers? I am waiting for more information about this investment.

Farmers in my region, Salaberry—Suroît, are also concerned about international agreements that could cut into their revenue. The government promised dairy producers a tenth of the compensation the Conservatives were offering, and yet, the budget is silent on the subject of compensation.

Has the government forgotten the promises it made to our farmers? The government needs to confirm their compensation packages, fix the diafiltered milk problem, and confirm that it will maintain supply management. Agriculture is an important sector of the economy, in my riding and across Canada.

Let us talk about high-speed Internet in rural areas. I welcome the federal government's commitment to develop Internet access for Canada's remote and rural areas. The Internet has become essential. It allows us to work, socialize, and access crucial information. Unfortunately, the connecting Canadians program has more to do with developing major networks like Bell, Videotron, and Rogers.

What is the government doing to help Haut-Saint-Laurent, the Soulanges area, or the far north? Those communities cannot benefit from the connecting Canadians program if they are not covered by one of the major networks. Huntingdon is less than two hours from Montreal, and yet it does not have high-speed Internet. I cannot imagine how bad it is in the far north.

The Budget

I also want to talk about food banks, which is an issue in the regions. Last December, use of food banks in my region increased by 300%. We have asked how the government is supporting food assistance programs. There is nothing in the budget for that, and when we asked about it in question period, we got no response. The community food bank in my region is on the verge of shutting down.

• (1255)

Where are all those families supposed to go for food? Could the government show some compassion and invest where it is needed most? Could it stop lining the pockets of those who are already very wealthy and are not in need of government assistance?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the presentation by my colleague opposite and heard there were concerns that this budget does nothing for young people who are in the vulnerable situation of having left home, having no supports, and find themselves, if not in emergency shelters, in a very precarious situation with respect to housing. The member opposite seemed to suggest that this budget does nothing specifically to address that.

While I agree that there is no specific allotment or carve-out for youth shelters or youth housing, would the member opposite not agree that the \$11.2 billion, on top of a base of \$14.8 billion, which constitutes close to \$16 billion over the next 10 years for housing, constitutes a significant investment in housing? A substantial portion of that, a doubling of it in the last year alone, is dedicated strictly to shelter services to provide emergency shelter. That is combined with a health accord that also has dollars for shelter use, and for vulnerable youth in particular who are facing addictions or mental health issues, as well as mental health services that will be provided to all youth under the age of 25 in this country to eliminate wait times. All of these measures are directly aimed at that particular group of vulnerable youth. Would she not say that those are measures that address the concerns she has raised?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, we did indeed notice that there is investment in affordable housing. However, 90% of that investment in affordable housing will be made after the 2019 election, and 50% after 2024. That makes no sense.

In reference to investments in health services for young indigenous peoples, Cindy Blackstock said:

There is nothing new in the budget for first nations children and their families, in child welfare, or their implementation of the Jordan's Principle, even though they have been found out of compliance with legal orders to stop that inequality. It is a moral issue: is Canada so broke that the finance minister and the Prime Minister have made a deliberate choice to discriminate against little kids?

Those are not my words.

• (1300)

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît on her speech. We get the sense of her sincere commitment to her constituents, both young and old, who by all accounts are dealing with all sorts of challenges. Hers is a regional

riding, but it is not very remote. It is near Montreal, but it does not have high-speed Internet service.

I would like to ask the hon. member whether, as the critic for youth, she finds it especially dangerous to see that the government said any old thing during the election campaign, has broken its promises, and then made cuts in the budget. Does this not fuel the cynicism of the people she encounters every day at work?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his question.

People are becoming increasingly disillusioned. Every time a promise is broken, fewer people want to get involved in politics. It is very difficult to engage youth and to have them take an interest in politics because they are promised things that do not materialize.

We spoke about food aid. We noted that young people these days really care about the environment. However, investments in fighting climate change will be cut by \$1.2 million in the next two years. My colleague is working on the electrification of transportation, but the public transit tax credit has been withdrawn.

Why would the government do that if climate change is one of its priorities? I certainly did not make it a budget priority. There is nothing. What is the plan for the energy transition? Where will the Liberals actually invest? What kind of renewable energy are the Liberals going to invest in? There is nothing about that in the budget. Did they cut the fossil fuel subsidies? No. They reinvested in three pipelines. What is going on?

The National Energy Board is very important. The people of Soulanges have a lot of questions. The Vaudreuil-Soulanges RCM submitted a brief yesterday in an attempt to find out what Energy East intends to do. The budget does not answer these questions. That is very worrisome and only fuels people's cynicism.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert.

Our government believes in helping those who need it most. We believe that Canada is strong because of our differences, not in spite of them. We are proudly moving forward on a progressive platform, and we believe in laying the groundwork for sustained, inclusive economic growth. That includes rural Canada, which contains more than 4,500 rural communities, more than one-quarter of the country's population, and about 80% of Canada's territory.

Budget 2017 hits it out of the park for rural Canada. For starters, I know Canada can be an agricultural powerhouse. We have the fertile land, hard-working people, the know-how, and the world trusts the safety of our food.

The Budget

A couple of weeks ago, I had the chance to visit the Rayner Dairy Research centre in Saskatoon. I got to talk to the barn manager, Morgan Hobin, and several faculty members. I have to say that I was really impressed. With talent like we have in Saskatchewan, Hastings—Lennox and Addington, and across the country, I am very happy to see that the innovation and skills agenda sets an ambitious target to grow Canada's agrifood exports to at least \$75 billion annually by 2025. Plus, there is \$70 million over six years, starting in 2017, for agricultural discovery science and innovation to support the sustainability of Canada's agricultural sector, in addition to the \$30 million announced last year for genomics research.

We are also continuing on our commitment from last year's budget with the investment of \$500 million to expand high-speed Internet access in rural and remote communities, the largest-ever federal investment in broadband infrastructure. For me, the issue of broadband Internet is not so different from that of the railroad. The national dream that was the national sea-to-sea railroad built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries made Canada as we know it possible. It linked our country together, expanded the settlement of rural communities, and drove our economy forward by opening up our markets and fostering opportunities for entrepreneurs from around the world. Fast forward to the 21st century, and we find a new national dream, with equally great possibilities for linking people, retaining and even expanding rural populations, and driving economic growth. We could call it the "broadband revolution".

Both of these periods in time have seen a great transformation, where technology and globalization have revolutionized the workforce. We can ensure that rural Canada can not only survive this transformation, but thrive in this globally connected economy. This is helped, in part, by a transformation in the Canadian entrepreneurial spirit, facilitated by equal access to high-speed Internet in rural communities.

Rural Canadians have the ideas and a vast under-tapped capacity for driving economic growth in this country. Our government gets it. My rural colleagues and I have all experienced shortfalls in high-speed Internet in our own rural communities. We bring that experience to government. As chair of a strong 50-member rural caucus, I was blessed with the chance to raise these issues of connectivity and economic potential with our colleagues in government, and they listened.

We have \$500 million in funding for broadband in rural and remote communities across Canada. I am very proud to be part of a government that is so willing to listen and to look forward, not to the next general election, but to the next generation. By delivering increased broadband coverage to underserved areas across Canada, we are enabling rural Canadians to unleash their entrepreneurial spirit, push employment and business opportunities up, and grow the middle class. It is all about connection.

When we talk about high-speed Internet connection, of course, what we are really talking about is a human connection: connecting a child to the online tools they need for school; connecting the small-scale entrepreneur to online markets for their products; and connecting rural Canadians to each other and to the world. There has been a wealth of success stories that have emerged from communities across the country when they have truly become digitally engaged. We can learn from their success, and not just

replicate but expand upon their economic potential, not just for the near future but for generations to come.

● (1305)

I also want to talk about something that every municipal politician in this country knows very well, and that is infrastructure. Taking into account existing infrastructure programs and new investments, the Government of Canada will be investing more than \$180 billion in infrastructure over 12 years. We know that municipalities, particularly small rural municipalities, shoulder a heavy burden, and they need help. Small rural communities like I have in my riding, such as Carlow Mayo, or Tudor and Cashel, can find it very difficult to compete with communities of 100,000 people or more for existing infrastructure funds. They lack the necessary human resources relative to larger communities to successfully brand their needs and to complete the complicated application processes.

Small communities also lack the financial resources needed to hire grant writers, or even to pay for the necessary reports to include with those applications. For example, a community of 2,000 people cannot afford \$40,000 to generate a report for an application, particularly if that application is turned down and then sits on a shelf and collects dust. These small communities also usually cover large areas, making the proportion of roadways that they have to maintain even larger and more burdensome relative to their population. This is why I am happy to see \$2 billion set aside for infrastructure specifically for rural and remote communities, in addition to access to other funding programs. I have pushed for it to be used for what rural communities truly need: roads, bridges, and high-speed Internet. Since we have a government that consults, that is what our government has done.

This funding would also be flexible according to the unique needs of each province. To me, ensuring that these funds address the unique needs of small communities requires a separate definition for what a truly small community is. The size should vary in population from province to province, since municipalities in each province are structured differently. That is exactly what I have been hearing from municipal politicians across my riding, and from Alberta and Saskatchewan and others. One thing is very clear: a small rural community is definitely not a community that has 100,000 people in it, not even close. Getting these things right is going a long way to levelling the infrastructure playing field for small rural communities across the country, and I am proud to be part of a government that is not taking rural Canada for granted.

The Budget

My riding also has higher than average levels of child poverty, so improvement in this area needs to be a top priority. Last year, we put the Canada child benefit into action, which has had a huge impact in my riding, through the distribution of \$5.9 million every single month to almost 9,300 low-income and middle-income families in my riding. It has had a positive impact for almost 17,000 children. That is \$5.9 million each month in the pockets of families in Hastings—Lennox and Addington, which is spent on local businesses every single month. This year, we have promised \$7 billion over 10 years, starting in 2018, to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care spaces across the country. It is what families need and have been asking for, so we are responding with action.

Health care is also a top priority for rural communities. We are strengthening Canada's publicly funded universal health care system to meet the needs of Canadian families. I am very happy to see that budget 2017 confirms the government's historic health agreements with 12 provinces and territories, by investing in better home care and mental health initiatives that would help the families who need it most. Investment in home care helps to distribute health and wellness further out into our communities, which is a huge benefit to rural Canadians in rural communities.

We are ensuring that all Canadians benefit from and play an active role in their communities. Whether it is roads and bridges, agriculture, high-speed Internet, health care, or child care, these are the tools that our small rural communities need to attract and retain young families and businesses, and to foster their economic development for years to come. Budget 2017 will deliver on them.

• (1310)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks about his love for rural Canada, but one thing I did not catch in his speech was the value of the hunting, angling, and outfitting industry in rural Canada. The Liberal member for Long Range Mountains owned a number of fishing and hunting lodges in Newfoundland.

The reason I start with this preamble is that the recently announced Firearms Advisory Committee by the Minister of Public Safety does not have a single representative from the tourism, hunting and outfitting industry in it, one of the most significant industries in rural Canada. It is a travesty that the Firearms Advisory Committee has a number of anti-firearms representatives on it, and not a single representative, as I said, from the outfitting industry or the hunting and angling community.

Could the member comment on the discrepancy in the makeup of the Firearms Advisory Committee, which obviously is designed to further restrict hunters, farmers, sport shooters, and especially the outfitting industry in rural Canada?

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Speaker, our government is very much focused on the rural sector, as well as the tourism sector. We are making investments in tourism through the tourism marketing board of Canada. The minister continues to consult with a multitude of different groups on firearms legislation and the hunting and angling industry, as is the Minister of Environment consulting around conservation.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, which just completed a report on protected areas. We met with a number of different hunting and angling organizations in order to protect and conserve the areas that hunters are most interested in. Our government is taking a number of different actions to benefit the hunting and angling sector, and to protect and conserve the lands they require the most. I am sure that the Minister of Public Safety is going to consider and consult all organizations when it comes to any regulations around that issue.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I must admit that I am scratching my head trying to figure out how this man, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, can support such measures.

His government claims to want to build a new economy and move into the future. We have all heard those buzzwords before. However, in reality, it cut nearly \$1.6 billion in funding for the fight against climate change, approved three pipelines, and did away with the public transit tax credit, which benefited ordinary Canadians in a very real way.

How can a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development stand up and defend such a budget?

[English]

Mr. Mike Bossio: Mr. Speaker, I very proudly stand behind our government's record when it comes to climate change actions. We are taking a multitude of different actions, by establishing a price on pollution, by investing in innovation. Through the price on pollution, that is one tack to dealing with climate change. By investing in innovation and in green technology, we hollow out the need for fossil fuels in the future, so that we can deal with climate change in that respect. We are making the investments today that are going to help us evolve from our dependence on fossil fuels.

I am very proud of the actions that our government has taken so far. I am very proud of the work we have done at the environment committee around the Federal Sustainable Development Act that addresses some of the issues around the 17 sustainable development goals. There is the work we have done on protected spaces, and the report we are about to complete on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. We are taking a lot of the measures necessary to make a cleaner environment, cleaner water, and cleaner air for future generations.

[Translation]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for this opportunity to say a few words about our budget.

The Budget

Eighteen months ago, our government announced its intention to make Canada a global centre for innovation. We were well aware that this was an ambitious project and that everyone would have to do their part in order to come up with a constructive approach. We therefore asked Canadians to help. The response was overwhelming, with over 100,000 Canadians agreeing to share their opinions.

Canadians said that our plan must create jobs and support services that make Canada a better place to live. They said that this plan must help Canada to adapt and prosper in a period of slow growth and rapid change. Most importantly, they told us that whatever plan we come up with must ensure that all Canadians, not just a select few, benefit from a growing economy.

Budget 2017 takes steps to make Canadians' vision for their country a reality. The innovation and skills plan announced in the budget is an effort to make Canada a world-leading centre for innovation, to help create more good, well-paying jobs, and to help strengthen and grow the middle class. It will ensure that everyone, no matter their gender, their age, or where they live, benefits equally from a more innovative society.

These are the people who drive innovation. Innovation is what happens when smart, creative people find new solutions, from zippers for winter jackets to treatments for rare diseases.

Innovation is also changing the world in which we live. Economies are shifting. Automation is on the rise. The nature of work is being redefined. For Canadian workers to thrive in an innovation-driven economy, they must have the skills they need to succeed. Canada's workforce is one of the most well-educated in the world, but in an increasingly competitive global economy, we need to do more to help Canadians learn, adapt, and find good jobs throughout their careers.

To ensure that training and employment programs help unemployed and underemployed Canadians upgrade their skills and get good jobs in the new economy, budget 2017 proposes \$2.7 billion over six years for new federal investments and assistance delivered through the labour market transfer agreements with the provinces and territories.

For those Canadians seeking employment, this measure will give them greater opportunities to upgrade their skills, gain experience, or get some help to start a business of their own. It will also help increase the support offered, such as professional counselling services to help them plan their careers.

In addition, in order to help more unemployed Canadians get the training they need to find a better well-paying job, budget 2017 proposes using more of the measures that make the employment insurance system so flexible, things like allowing applicants to take training, at their own expense, without losing their EI status. This would therefore make it easier for unemployed Canadians who are receiving employment insurance benefits to go back to school to get the training they need to get a new job, without having to worry about losing their benefits, which they need to provide for themselves and their families.

To help more adult workers wanting to go back to school, budget 2017 proposes to expand eligibility for Canada student grants to part-time students and students with dependent children. This

translates into more non-repayable assistance for adult workers in order to help them manage the rising cost of post-secondary education while balancing the financial pressures associated with caring for a family.

As a result of this change, roughly 10,000 part-time students will become eligible for Canada student loans and grants every year, and roughly 13,000 students with dependants will become eligible for Canada student grants every year. These measures should be beneficial, especially to women trying to improve their job prospects while raising a family.

No lifelong learning program would be complete without a focus on the future. The youth employment strategy is a government-wide initiative that helps young Canadians start their career on the right foot. Budget 2017 proposes to invest an additional \$395.5 million over three years in the youth employment strategy effective 2017-18.

● (1320)

Together with the measures in the 2016 budget, these investments will help more than 33,000 vulnerable young people acquire or develop the skills they need to find a job or to help them return to school. These measures will also create 15,000 new green jobs for Canadian youth and provide more than 1,600 new job opportunities for youth in the heritage sector.

We will also move forward with the youth service initiative to help young people gain valuable work experience, while providing support for communities across Canada. This initiative, which will be launched in the fall of 2017, will include a call for proposals to give youth the opportunity to serve.

The 2017 budget introduces the innovation and skills plan, which provides real and fair opportunities to improve our standard of living and that of our children. The plan includes a range of measures to help adults retrain or upgrade their skills so they can adapt to a changing labour market. The plan includes measures to help young Canadians get the education, skills, and work experience they need to start their careers.

With its comprehensive plan to promote lifelong learning for all Canadians and to help Canadian youth succeed, budget 2017 will make our greatest resource, our people, an even better resource.

This is a great reason for honourable members to unreservedly support this budget.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the features of the budget that has raised a lot of concern in my province of British Columbia, and I am sure across this country, has to do with the budget's removal of the public transit tax credit, which many Canadians who rely on public transit every month have been able to take advantage of.

Many people are telling me that this is a tax credit that benefits a lot of low-income people, benefits a lot of seniors, benefits a lot of working people who rely on public transit, and is good for the environment because it encourages people to get out of their cars and take public transit.

The budget leaves intact the stock option credit tax loophole, which gives a preference to CEOs and other very wealthy executives to transfer money to themselves in the form of stock options.

I wonder if the member has any opinion on whether it was a wise policy choice to keep the CEO stock option tax credit but remove the public transit user tax credit, which benefits many Canadians. What is her opinion on that?

• (1325)

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on the last part because I honestly have very little to say on that. I do not know enough about it.

However, with respect to the non-refundable tax credit for transit passes, it has been proven that it was not helping in any way to encourage more Canadians to take transit, and people in lower-income brackets were not benefiting from it at all because they do not pay tax anyway. One has to actually pay tax to benefit from it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to follow up on the last question, the very least they could have done was make it a non-refundable tax credit so that it would actually help those who need to use public transit.

My greater concern is found on page 251 of the budget, where we see an incredible rise in the total debt that the government is incurring. This year \$24.7 billion will be paid in interest, and in 2021 \$33.3 billion will be paid in interest.

I wonder if my colleague shares my concern that we are borrowing money on the backs of future generations and simply pushing this cost onto our children and grandchildren.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: Mr. Speaker, no, I am not concerned, in the sense that I believe we are right now paying interest on debt that the previous government left us. We have not even started paying interest on the debt that we are incurring ourselves.

However, Liberal governments have, through history, proven that they are very fiscally responsible, and I am very confident that our government will be as fiscally responsible as those before us.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric and the language in the budget are so encouraging. There are wonderful commitments on child care and there is language on climate change. The concern I have is that roughly nine-tenths of the spending is to be done after the next election. With respect to public transit, about \$1 billion of the \$20 million will be spent before 2019. Funding for child care spaces will not begin until 2018.

When it comes to fiscal responsibility, I do not know why we cannot have a budget for a year that clearly states what the government is going to spend in that particular year. I do not know why it cannot be stated clearly so that people can understand it.

I find that much of the good spending that is being promised is for after the next election. Climate change is an urgent matter, and we need to be doing the work now.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: Mr. Speaker, we did start last year in the 2016 budget.

As politicians, we are often accused of only thinking of the electoral cycle that we are in and not caring about a vision for the future. Right now our government is proving exactly the contrary. As a government, we want to see how we can provide leadership for the next 10 and 20 years with respect to where we need to go in climate change and the changes in our economy, and the innovation we need to bring to all sectors of the economy to face the challenges of the next 10 and 20 years.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Liberal government's second budget.

One of the primary lessons we are taught in life starting at a very young age is that we are to learn from our past mistakes. This lesson is clearly lost on the Liberals. It seems that instead of learning from their mistakes, they have decided to double down on them and hedge all bets on their plan that is already clearly failing. As the voice for taxpayers from the great riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, I cannot let the Liberal government continue on with its reckless spending and failed economic plan for Canada without pointing out some of the major pitfalls and dangers ahead.

This budget, like the Liberals' first budget, has completely forgotten middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join them. They will need to work even harder now. With these past two budgets, the Liberal government has made life more expensive for Canadians while simultaneously shrinking their take-home pay. This has to stop.

The good people of Kitchener—Conestoga needed a break, and that is what they were hoping for in this last budget, but they certainly did not get one. Canadians are not looking for bigger, shinier promises that will cost millions but never produce jobs or economic growth. They are looking for common-sense solutions to our most pressing problems.

They want their paycheques to increase, which means lower payroll taxes. They want their children to grow up with good job prospects, and that means growing the economy and lowering taxes on small business. They want Canada to remain a safe country, and that means investing in our military. They want their commutes to work to be shorter so they can spend more time with their families. That means getting shovels in the ground and infrastructure projects built, not just announced over and over again.

The Budget

Unfortunately, budget 2016 and budget 2017 did none of those things. This budget is proof that the Prime Minister is out of touch with the needs of working people.

Despite the Prime Minister's promise to return the budget to balance, he admitted on budget day that he has no intention whatsoever of returning our books to balance. Not only did the Prime Minister break his campaign promise to spend only \$10 billion in deficit financing, but the upcoming deficit for the year ahead is \$29 billion. The government, in four years, will add a whopping \$100 billion to Canada's federal debt. The interest charges alone just for this year will be \$24.3 billion, and that number increases every year for the foreseeable future under the Liberal government. By 2021, our interest costs alone will be \$33.3 billion each and every year. Let us think about what good that \$33 billion could be doing: increases to health care transfers, investments in palliative care, hospices, and home care, more money invested in infrastructure, or how about simply reducing our tax burden.

As I have already noted, this budget fails in many areas, but I will focus on three of them: Canada's infrastructure, our troops, and our farmers. The Liberal government often pats itself on the back for what it says is historic infrastructure funding. The truth is the only part of this funding that is historic is how far after the next election cycle this money is budgeted for. Very little of the funding that was promised has gone to roads and highways. We need shovels in the ground. We want people working. We want roads, bridges, and water treatment facilities built.

Ninety-four per cent of the announced infrastructure projects have not even started. This means that jobs are not being created and the economy is not being stimulated. Instead of coming up with a new plan that actually builds infrastructure and creates jobs, budget 2017 doubles down on the existing infrastructure plan and contains no new infrastructure spending beyond what was already announced in the 2016 fall economic update.

By allocating public transit funding based on ridership, the Liberal government is disadvantaging Canada's growing communities in favour of already developed large urban centres. I am thinking of the Waterloo region. Too often our medium-sized communities are left to fend for themselves. Of course, a bridge in Wellesley township will never have the traffic volume crossing it that an inner-city bridge does, but that does not mean it is not important to the growth and health of our local economy.

Municipalities need good and safe infrastructure, but they also need programs that are easy to access without miles and miles of red tape, programs that provide predictable funding and do not leave small and rural communities behind. Even if the government is bent on favouring the large urban centres and funding major public transit projects, why in the world would it take measures to decrease ridership on public transit? This makes no sense. We should be increasing the tax credit, not eliminating it.

• (1330)

An adult monthly pass holder in my riding would be losing out on about \$150 per year, or the equivalent of almost two months' worth of bus passes. Talk about encouraging people to take transit. Getting 12 months of public transit for the cost of 10 is a fantastic incentive. I have not heard even one of my colleagues on the other side of the

House defend this policy decision, but I think I know why. It is totally indefensible.

There is all this while the Liberal government has introduced its plan for a carbon tax. Let me get this straight. The Liberals are raising the price of gasoline and raising the cost of taking the bus. Do the Liberals think that all Canadians can just work from home? This makes absolutely no sense. The Conservatives will continue to hold the Liberals to account and push for open, transparent, and accountable infrastructure funding for our communities, and plans to increase ridership on public transit, not decrease it.

The budget turns its back on our men and women in uniform who stand up to defend our values and our democratic freedoms. For the second year in a row, the budget contained nothing for our men and women in uniform. Instead, the Liberals cut \$8.48 billion that had been earmarked for military equipment purchases. Coupled with last year's cuts, the Department of National Defence now faces a \$12-billion shortfall. National defence is clearly not a priority for the Liberal government.

In an era of reckless Liberal spending, it is appalling that the largest cuts are consistently at the expense of our Canadian Armed Forces. Recent examples include the Liberals' decision to pull our CF-18s out of the fight against ISIS, their preference for fourth generation fighter jets, their lack of increased support for our Ukrainian allies, and their failure to advance important procurement projects. All of these suggest that the current Prime Minister does not have our national defence as a high priority and expects other countries to do the heavy lifting.

While Canada's allies have committed to modernizing their military capabilities and spending 2% of their GDP on defence, the Prime Minister is being dangerously naive. Despite the clear need for investments in Canada's national defence, the finance minister stated recently that the government believes the military is "appropriately provisioned". I will continue to stand up and point out that we need to provide the resources that our Canadian Armed Forces deserve. We want them to be able to carry out the tasks that we give them, and more importantly, to return home safe to their families.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about our farmers. As a farmer myself and an MP for a riding that has a strong farming community, these hard-working Canadians are always a priority for me. Unfortunately, they do not seem to be much of a priority for the Liberal government. Budget 2017 does nothing to support this hard-working Canadian farmer class. So much for standing up for the middle class.

The Budget

In fact, farmers and fishermen may face higher insurance premiums resulting from the Liberals' decision to scrap the income tax exemption for insurers of farming and fishing property. In addition, the Liberals have indicated they plan to eliminate the income tax deferral for grain producers. By failing to provide any details regarding the next agricultural policy framework, the Liberals have left Canadian farmers in the dark. What support programs will they have in the future, if any? New money for science and innovation is focused on climate change and soil and water conservation, but fails to provide support for new business risk management approaches for farmers.

The Liberals are promising to launch a full review of rail service in western Canada, but farmers are getting tired of waiting. They need dependable rail service to get their crops to market.

It is clear the government has turned its back on the middle class in favour of its rich friends. We saw this in the beginning with its so-called middle-class tax cut that benefited people making over \$160,000 but did absolutely nothing for Canadians who make the average income in Canada of \$50,000. Now we are seeing the middle class left behind again by increasing payroll taxes and eliminating the public transit tax credit. I am afraid to even think about what they have in mind for the middle class next year. Canadians should hold on to their wallets.

For the sake of my constituents in Kitchener—Conestoga and with their best interests in mind, I will be voting against this budget. It is heading in the wrong direction and is pushing our debt on to our children and grandchildren. We owe it to them to do better.

• (1335)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member opposite, who said that this budget did nothing for the Kitchener-Waterloo region. Let me quote what Kitchener Mayor Berry Vrbancovic called it. He called this budget transformational. He said, "This budget is transformational because it empowers local governments to deliver outcomes for Canadians: shorter commutes, more affordable housing and a better quality of life", and, in particular, it will focus on talent development, attraction, and retention to make Canada a global leader in the world of infrastructure and technology, critical issues for Kitchener-Waterloo.

The member opposite said that he had heard no criticism from this side of the House on the tax changes around monthly charges for transit passes. Is he aware that the tax that the Harper government brought in did not change one travel pattern, according to the data? In fact, the non-refundable tax credit meant that the 40% lowest-income group of transit riders did not qualify for the tax credit. Only affluent riders did. Further to that, those with the lowest of the lowest income, the poorest of the poor who paid with cash or single tickets because they cannot afford a multi-pass could not even qualify for the tax credit. That is why we removed it. We do not believe in taxing the poor to pay for the rich. We believe in investing in services. The \$22 billion for transit is exactly why Kitchener-Waterloo would benefit. Above and beyond that, the GO Transit investment is even higher and will create all-day service to Kitchener-Waterloo in a way that it has never been there before.

Is that not good news for his region and why will he not support the budget because of it?

• (1340)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that it was the Conservative government that invested over \$250 million in the light rapid transit system in the Waterloo region. We saw the advantage of that and there are many facets to why we did. First, it would help to intensify the development in the downtown area rather than having continual urban sprawl which eats up more and more agricultural land. The other thing that the government champions is trying to protect our environment. By adding people to the roads and highways of our communities, we are not protecting our environment. It is very important that we encourage more public transit riders and the way to do that is to incentivize it through tax credits. If it is not working for the lowest of the low, why not make it non-refundable rather than cancel it, when we are investing all this money in public transit? It makes no sense.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on that last comment about the Liberal government's cancelling the public transit tax credit. There is a lot of rhetoric being thrown around here that does not make any sense whatsoever. The Liberals are claiming that this did not help low-income users. The only tax-exempt limit in this country is about \$12,000. People who make under \$12,000 of income, they do not pay any taxes, but people who make above \$12,000 have to pay taxes. It is those people, the people who make \$14,000, \$16,000, \$20,000, or \$24,000—and I do not know if the Liberals view those people as low income, but I certainly do—are the ones who use that public transit non-refundable tax credit to reduce their incomes that get taxed. That is how the tax system works.

I would ask my hon. colleague if he shares that analysis of the tax system. I have had people in Vancouver tell me that the public transit tax credit is the only tax credit that they could actually utilize, and these are people making \$18,000 a year, low-income Canadians. What does he think about the Liberals cancelling that?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right on regarding the people who use this public transit tax credit. Very shortly after the budget was delivered, I heard from someone who uses this tax credit and it saves him up to around \$150 a month. In my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, the average person would save up to \$150 a month, but in Toronto and some of the more urban areas where the cost of a transit pass is much higher, a rider would save up to \$260 a month. Families would be looking at saving \$500.

The Budget

Again, my Liberal colleagues might not think that \$500 is very much, but for the middle-class people whom I represent, \$500 is a huge amount. It is a big incentive to help them with their taxes. More importantly, it increases ridership for the investment in infrastructure that we are borrowing money to build, which will be less than half full. Why would we not try to get more people using public transit?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reviews are in, and the critics have spoken. Full of baffleleg and devoid of substance, budget 2017 is a bust, which comes as no surprise. This is a buzzword budget from a buzzfeed Prime Minister that is all sizzle and no substance. Unfortunately, no list of the Prime Minister's 17 best selfies will get Canadians to take the government seriously.

If the government was serious about national security, it would not be cutting the defence budget. If the government was serious about lifting up our economy, it would not be weighing it down with carbon taxes. If the government was serious about passing legislation, it would not need to change the rules of Parliament.

The Liberals are not serious, not competent, and obviously not up to the job. Sadly, Canadians have no recourse until the next election. Our only chance to correct the disastrous course the Liberals have taken is to convince them in words they understand, so let us buzzfeed this budget.

Let us start with an easy one. Here are five ways Liberal budgets are helping the rich or hurting the poor.

First, wealthy developers can now claim the eco-gift tax-credit loophole for up to 10 years.

Second, while developers get their credits doubled, hard-working Canadians lose their transit pass credits.

Third, excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco hit the poor hardest, and the regressive Liberal government has raised them.

Fourth, the government's upper-class tax cut shifted the tax burden to the poor. If we cut taxes on the top 50% more than we raise them on the top 1%, the burden of taxes falls on the Canadians the government thinks are not middle class enough to deserve a tax cut.

Fifth, as we learned last week from the example of Bombardier's executives, the people who benefit from the government's corporate welfare are well-connected Liberal insiders.

Speaking of corporate welfare, I asked constituents to tell me what three things in the budget are most likely to lead to another sponsorship scandal. The result was a tie for second place between the eco-gift tax credit and the Liberal infrastructure bank. Many found doubling the eco-gift tax credit suspicious, and others had concerns about the blending of public and private interests in the infrastructure bank.

However, the number one item in the budget my constituents think is most likely to lead to the next Liberal sponsorship scandal is the supercluster fund. The budget promises to spend nearly \$1 billion on superclusters, but it does not say how the money will be spent. That is because no government can spend a cluster into existence. That is why the government failed to establish the cluster program in last year's budget. Clearly the government was not

stopped by its failure. Instead, it has doubled down with a super-cluster fund. There is no metric to measure success, which I am sure the Auditor General will have some questions about. It is no wonder so many people think these Liberal cluster funders will leave us with another sponsorship scandal.

According to the usual fake news are promises of more innovation, more infrastructure, and more tax fairness. As noted in newspaper headlines, these are empty buzzwords, like the number of times the Prime Minister invokes the words "middle class" and spinners repeat the words, on the theory that repetition somehow makes them come true.

Higher and higher spending debt will move Canada backwards and land the spending bill on our children.

Here is what the government has promised for 2019, the election year, when Canadians can finally pass judgment on its policies. The economy will grow more slowly and will be smaller by some \$47 billion. Massive cuts to Canada's defence budget will have this country relying on the U.S.A. to defend our borders like never before. Unemployment will be higher, losing almost 60,000 anticipated jobs. The Canadian dollar will be down almost four cents, lowering every Canadian's net worth. Tax revenues will be lower and program spending will be higher, reflecting a weaker fiscal position. Finally, there will be \$102 billion in new debt from huge annual deficits, leaving a mess to be paid for by our children and grandchildren. This budget is truly outrageous.

Canadians who were shocked by the actual size of the federal deficit last year are numb from these latest figures in the budget. The excuse for piling up huge deficits in last year's budget was that manufacturers needed to kick-start an already growing economy. Thanks to the prudent financial measures practised by the previous Conservative government, the economy was growing, and real full-time employment was being enjoyed by Canadians. Canada had a balanced budget.

● (1345)

The finance minister brought in his huge deficit budget anyway, with a fake promise of the need to massively tax and borrow to spend on infrastructure. In fact, infrastructure spending was held out as the excuse by the government for the huge rise in the deficit. Today the parliamentary budget officer is asking where the infrastructure spending is.

The Budget

The municipalities in my riding are asking the same question. On page 89 of budget 2016, municipalities were promised \$837 million, which was left over from the Conservative infrastructure program. Those were funds that were available and would have seen shovels in the ground almost immediately. The construction season in 2016 was missed, and it looks like the 2017 construction season will be missed also.

More importantly, the budget promised to distribute the borrowed funds through the gas-tax method of distribution. This is an important distinction in my riding, because federal gas-tax funds are distributed in a fair, transparent manner by a third party on a per capita base. By distributing funds on a per capita basis, all municipalities can count on receiving some funding. Municipalities do not have to rely on the application-based *Wheel of Fortune* method of receiving funding favoured by the Toronto Liberal Party.

In my riding, the county of Renfrew has felt it necessary to spend tax dollars to hire a lobbyist in Ottawa to get an infrastructure project funded. We know, to paraphrase the media, that it is raining lobbyists in Ottawa. People have to pay to play in Gerald Butts' Ottawa. These are taxpayer dollars that would be better used on an actual project, rather than being spent on government lobbyists.

If infrastructure dollars are not being spent on infrastructure, where is the money going? It has been suggested that an elaborate shell game is going on, with certain Liberal-friendly provinces redirecting infrastructure funds into general funds as slush accounts to help them get re-elected.

That same shell game applies to other announcements in budget 2017. The decision to reallocate, which is Liberal-speak for cut, \$8.5 billion in the defence budget marks the beginning of a double decade of darkness for Canada's women and men in the armed forces. The only way to cut short decades of darkness for Canada's military would be a change of government in 2019.

Canada's veterans are being spun that there might be something for them in this budget. However, proof is in the actual results. All veterans have seen so far is money from their budget being spent on empty offices in government ridings and more bureaucrats to sit in those offices.

The question veterans need to ask is whether they are seeing any material, financial improvement in recognition of their sacrifices. Veterans, such as Warrant Officer Roger Perreault, have told me that it is not the lack of programs; it is the arcane process of qualifying for the programs, where multiple appeals are common. Gerald Butts needs to instruct the Prime Minister to implement a policy of getting the decision right the first time when it comes to the health and well-being of our veterans. If the government is looking for a way to streamline the process for soldiers who are transitioning out of the military, it should focus on making the decision before the soldier is released from the military, without the need for costly appeals that tie up departmental resources in the courts. It is a false economy to plan on denying veterans benefits with the expectation that the veterans will eventually give up on receiving what they are entitled to.

Soldiers who were expecting the clawback of their danger pay to not only stop but be reversed are deeply disappointed, with no mention of this bafflegab in the budget. The pay clawback shows

what the current government really thinks about our women and men in uniform.

Owners of family-owned campgrounds expecting some tax fairness in this budget were shocked by the decision to double the budget for hiring tax collectors to put them out of business. Not every Canadian can afford to own a villa in the south of France, like the finance minister, or has a wealthy buddy who just happens to own an island in the Caribbean, like the Prime Minister, or gets a trip to a private-island getaway subsidized by Canadian taxpayers, at \$127,000 for the latest trip, that we know of. This is from a Prime Minister who wants to force changes to the rules of Parliament so that he only has to show up one day a week. If he wants to reduce his salary to pay for one day a week, then maybe Canadians will consider his outrageous request.

The government is out of touch with middle-class working Canadians. Their dream to own a home has been shattered.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a treat listening to the member across the way. She talked about veterans and that sacred trust. It is important to recognize that we have a Minister of Veterans Affairs who has actually done much more for Canada's vets than what the previous administration did for years. In fact, this particular minister rectified a wrong.

The member across the way will recall when the Stephen Harper government closed down veterans offices across this country. The vets were done a great disservice. This government, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Veterans Affairs recognized that, and we re-established those offices, because we believe in our veterans.

Does the member believe that Stephen Harper was wrong in closing those veterans offices in the first place?

• (1355)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, all these offices that were re-opened are great for the landlords but terrible for the veterans, because there is nobody in there to begin with. There are more bureaucrats, more salaries. What we should be focusing on is the people. The savings were going back into new programs so that veterans would have better care.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks and also for her great representation of a rural community.

This budget does very little for rural communities. If we look at page 111, the Liberals champion a lot of the investments they are making in agriculture, but in reality, most of the investments that are promised in this budget are funded well beyond the next election cycle.

Just to give an example, there is advancing agricultural science and innovation for a total of \$60 million. It sounds great until we look at the fact that only \$4 million of that is budgeted for next year and \$9 million is budgeted for the following year. The rest of it is all beyond the next election cycle.

Statements by Members

I wonder if my colleague has concerns about these promises that go well beyond the election cycle but really do almost nothing for the current farmers and small businesses in our ridings.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the dream of every Canadian is to own a home, but that dream has been shattered. Canadians do not want to live in social housing, but Liberal policy is making home ownership beyond the reach of ordinary Canadians, and they will never own their own homes. This budget, by pouring billions of dollars into social housing, is an admission of failure.

As my colleague says, there is nothing in the budget for seniors. Liberal carbon taxes on energy are forcing seniors to sell their own homes, which they have worked a lifetime to enjoy. With the price of electricity already out of control, this budget does nothing to address the electricity rate crisis in Ontario.

Being forced to move into social housing because they cannot afford their own homes is not the retirement most seniors had in mind.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a step back and talk about veterans.

As the previous member stated, the previous government did not just close those offices; it really did absolutely nothing for veterans in its time.

We have been in power for 18 months, and in this budget alone we are adding \$725 million in funding. In fact, the veterans ombudsman was pleased about three specific aspects of what we are doing in this budget. They are eliminating time limits for spouses and survivors to access vocational rehabilitation; expanding access to the military family resource centres; and providing a benefit for caregivers, including spouses and family members.

We are also adding a centre of excellence for PTSD, and a pension decision will be made public by the end of this year.

Does the member not feel that these actions will benefit our veterans?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in power, we opened 650 access points for veterans so they would be more able to enjoy and have benefits.

As far as the military ombudsman goes, the government has to stop bullying him while he is trying to do his job. He is trying to get the streamlining of benefits for people who have been medically released from the military, and all the Liberals are doing is trying to strangle his financial budget to get the job done.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

GLOBAL WEEK OF ACTION TO END TAX HAVENS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during this Global Week of Action to End Tax Havens, the Bloc Québécois is joining with citizens, unions, and civil society groups protesting outside the Prime Minister's constituency office in Montreal and all around the world.

The Bloc Québécois has always been at the forefront of the fight against tax havens running the gamut from Paul Martin's ships and the Irving shell game to tax regulations that favour Barbados and authorize the use of other tax havens. For the Bloc Québécois, the Global Week of Action to End Tax Havens lasts all year.

As usual, in Ottawa, this will be the week to support tax havens, and the government is doing a great job of that. Three Canadian banks represent 80% of the banking assets in Barbados, Grenada, and the Bahamas. On one hand the government is announcing millions of dollars in funding to combat fraud, while on the other it is legalizing all these schemes.

Ordinary Canadians are the ones who are paying the price. It is completely unfair, as demonstrated by austerity measures. Canada's leniency toward tax havens has gone on for far too long.

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● (1400)

[*English*]

HARVEY SMITH

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 10, long-time Winnipeg city councillor Harvey Smith passed away.

I had the distinct honour to work with Harvey for 14 years while we were both city councillors. Harvey was outspoken and was larger than life, but most of all he was a tireless advocate for social justice, for the ward of Daniel McIntyre, and for the City of Winnipeg.

Harvey fought for those less fortunate. One could never doubt his love and his commitment for his community and our city.

From his steadfast support to save Sherbrook Pool to his creative advocacy to improve back lanes to the rehabilitation of Central Park, Harvey was a true community champion, as was proven by the tributes that poured in from the people and organizations he touched.

Rest in peace, Harvey. Thank you so much for leaving such a lasting legacy for Winnipeg.

* * *

SUPERVISED INJECTION SITES

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I hosted a standing-room-only town hall meeting. The town hall was about four supervised injection sites proposed for north central Edmonton.

One of those will be in my riding of Edmonton Griesbach. I would like to thank the expert panellists who were there. Thanks go to Shelley Williams, deputy police chief Brian Simpson, Heather Stanchfield, Cris Basualdo, Ratan Lawrence, and Dr. Oluseyi Oladele.

Statements by Members

Everyone wants a healthy and safe community, and we all want to help people struggling with addictions. At the meeting, though, opinions differed on these controversial facilities. However, one thing is clear: the people whose houses are a stone's throw away are not too pleased, and they do not feel that they were sufficiently consulted about the locations.

The Liberal government promised thorough consultations about these injection sites nationwide. People living near these sites deserve more say.

* * *

[Translation]

PORT-ROYAL

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent a region with such enormous historical significance for Canada.

[English]

In 1605, Samuel de Champlain, among others, was welcomed by Membertou at Port-Royal, extending an enduring hand of peace and friendship between the Mi'kmaq and Acadian peoples.

Port-Royal was the first permanent European settlement in Canada. Unfortunately, in the CBC miniseries *Canada: The Story of Us*, which purports to tell the story of our nation, Port-Royal was not even mentioned, nor was the history of the Acadians, their settlement, their deportation, or their development into a people who have added so much to the rich culture of Atlantic Canada.

I urge the CBC to review these serious omissions and correct the historical record. The story of western Nova Scotia is an important part of Canada's story.

I invite all Canadians to visit our beautiful area this year on Canada's 150th anniversary and learn about the region's essential contribution to the foundation of our country.

* * *

GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 19, a teacher in my riding, Maggie MacDonnell, was awarded the Global Teacher Prize.

As children, we are fortunate if we have a strong network of support, encouragement, and inspiration. Sometimes in northern remote communities teachers come and then leave after only a few months, shocked by the isolation, limited resources, and different culture.

Maggie MacDonnell came to Salluit six years ago and, in her words, has built programs that cultivate resilience and hope and build self-belief in the youth of that community. Students have gained confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth.

Her students say that she is more than a teacher: for the whole community, she is a coach, a refuge, an advocate, a role model, and family.

With the prize, Maggie plans to start an organization promoting environmental stewardship with Inuit youth. Maggie is a Northern

Light who illuminates possibilities and hope into the lives of her students.

Maggie, *Meegwetch. Nakurmiik.*

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● (1405)

WILTON CHEESE FACTORY

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 150 years gives one plenty of time to mature, to ripen, to age to perfection. After 150 years, a celebration is definitely in order. I am, of course, speaking about the 150th anniversary of the Wilton Cheese Factory in historic Loyalist Township.

Founded as a farmers' co-operative in the same year as the birth of our great country, the Wilton Cheese Factory continues to serve our community under the family-run ownership of the Jensens, beginning with a handshake deal with master cheese maker Arne Jensen, who came to Canada as an immigrant in 1925. Through hard work and rural entrepreneurial spirit, he, his son, his grandson, and everyone who has worked at Wilton has made important contributions to the fabric of our community.

Eastern Ontario has a long, proud history of cheese production, and Wilton still operates today in the best of this tradition.

Please join with me in extending congratulations to everyone at the Wilton Cheese Factory for aging so well.

* * *

GO OUT & PLAY CHALLENGE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I recognize five communities in my riding of Yorkton—Melville. Wadena, Kelvington, Churchbridge, Langenburg, and the village of Buchanan competed against 21 other Saskatchewan communities in the Go Out & Play Challenge powered by Saskatchewan Blue Cross, a fun way to inspire parents and children to live healthier lifestyles through outdoor active play every day by logging in their activity minutes, with the goal to win \$10,000 for their community.

Buchanan would upgrade its community playground; Churchbridge eyed phase two of its sports park; Kelvington sought to upgrade its outdoor pool; Wadena wanted to create a walking path; Langenburg would kick-start funding for an outdoor pool. These are great communities and great projects.

Congratulations to Churchbridge, community runner-up prize-winner of \$5,000, for clocking 370,056 minutes, and congratulations to Langenburg, community grand prize winner of \$10,000, with 506,204 minutes of family physical activity.

*Statements by Members***PORT DE GRAVE FISHERMAN'S WEEKEND**

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every spring since 1992 the residents of the community of Port de Grave gather together prior to the start of fishing season to celebrate our fishery and all that it has done to provide for our people. They call it the “fisherman's weekend”. I was pleased to attend and celebrate with them again this year.

The weekend is jam-packed with events: a community breakfast, a church service, and of course the honoured tradition of the blessing of the fleet.

The community takes pride in this ceremony as it wishes the fishermen a prosperous season on the open seas and a safe return home to family and friends once the fishing is done.

I would like to thank Pastor White and the Pentecostal Church of Port de Grave for honouring this long-standing tradition and I join with the community of Port de Grave in wishing all seafarers a safe and successful season on the waters of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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SHEARWATER EAST DARTMOUTH MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): As Mr. Speaker knows, it is SEDMHA season in Dartmouth. I rise to commend the incredible volunteers who organize the premier minor hockey tournament in eastern Canada, SEDMHA.

As a hockey dad in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, I've always found SEDMHA to be bittersweet. It represents the end of the minor hockey season, so there will be no more practices or games and it will be a long wait until next season. Where else can we watch a minor hockey team from Serbia play kids from Bedford, Nova Scotia?

It has come a long way since its beginnings in the 1970s. It has hosted superstars like Sidney Crosby, Brad Marchand, and Nathan MacKinnon. SEDMHA is an economic driver in our community, filling the hotels, retail stores, and restaurants. It truly deserves our support.

I would like to give a huge thanks to all the volunteers who work hard to make SEDMHA happen. They are providing an amazing experience for our kids and families to remember for years to come.

* * *

MEDICINE HAT AND DISTRICT FOOD BANK

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to acknowledge the incredible efforts of food banks across this nation and the positive impact these not-for-profit organizations have on the thousands of individuals they serve.

The Medicine Hat and District Food Bank works collaboratively in community, with community, for community to ensure an adequate and accessible food support system is available to families and individuals in desperate need.

I want to highlight the leadership of our food bank's co-executive directors, Tammy Vanderloh and Celina Symmonds. As a team,

these two community leaders continually seek to implement programs that will not only meet immediate community food security needs, but also endeavour to free families from chronic food insecurity through various programs, along with the development and operation of an innovative food first program and community garden. All these efforts are part of a larger community plan to address poverty reduction strategies.

My wife Sue and I are honoured to be hosting Mrs. Tammy Vanderloh as she visits Parliament Hill today.

Well done Tammy, Celina, and the Medicine Hat and District Food Bank.

* * *

● (1410)

CANADA SUMMER GAMES

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while today may be the first day of the Blue Jays season, a glorious day indeed, I am rising today to speak of another important sporting event.

On Thursday, I gathered with many supporters in St. Catharines, anxiously awaiting for an announcement. A loud cheer was heard in the performing arts centre when we learned Niagara won the bid over three other communities to host the 2021 Canada Summer Games.

The Canada Summer Games is the largest multi-sport event in the country, and Niagara is excited and honoured to be only the third region in Ontario to host the games.

Having heard from our Olympic athletes, they never forget that first time they were able to put on the jacket with the name of their team on the back or their first opening ceremony. The Canada Summer Games provides those opportunities and a venue for our young athletes to develop and succeed.

The bid committee and Niagara area mayors and councils chose to go all in in bidding on the Canada Summer Games and were successful. The games will help to generate significant economic activity. I am proud to have this opportunity to congratulate them and all residents of St. Catharines on this great success.

* * *

[Translation]

SNOWMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, snow conditions are still fantastic in the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé, but the snowmobile season is coming to a close in my riding, so I would like to take this opportunity to talk about how important the snowmobile industry is to my region.

Some 4,800 kilometres of trails boasting breathtaking landscapes criss-cross our region. Snowmobilers from Canada, the United States, and farther afield are drawn to our thousands of kilometres of trails, our exceptional winter conditions, and eastern Quebec's unique mountain and ocean vistas.

Statements by Members

As an avid snowmobiler, I would like to congratulate and thank the people who run snowmobile clubs, the volunteers, and those who work in hotels, motels, restaurants, gas stations, and dealerships. Their warm welcome and outstanding service bring significant economic benefit to our communities.

The snowmobile industry generates \$110 million in economic spinoffs in the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé. Thanks to the dedication of people in the industry, our region is among the best in Canada.

* * *

[English]

ST. PETERSBURG METRO EXPLOSION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is sad news today out of Russia. An explosion has rocked the St. Petersburg metro system, with reports indicating that at least 10 people have died and 39 more have been injured, six of whom have critical injuries. We know these people were going about their normal everyday routine. They were fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, all of whom have had their lives changed forever.

In the strongest possible terms, we denounce this act of terror, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Russia.

While the motivation for these cowardly acts of violence is unknown, they showcase the very worst in humanity. Despite the evil intentions of the perpetrators, the western world will not be intimidated or frightened by these acts of violence. Our resolve is to seek justice and to promote human thriving. We will not be moved.

Today, we condemn this violence on innocent individuals and offer our prayers and condolences to the families in Russia.

* * *

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April 2 marked World Autism Awareness Day.

Autism continues to be a major health crisis in Canada and across the world. Through the raising of awareness, more resources have been dedicated towards research, treatment, and diagnoses.

However, even with the added awareness and resources toward autism, I have met many families that are struggling to access resources and help for their children with autism.

Nina Jain, a mother of an autistic child, faced this same challenge and took it upon herself to create an online resource, which can be found at able2learn.com. It has over 30,000 pages of material and over 900 products that provide free inclusive educational material, with a special focus on autism and learning disabilities for anyone.

I would like to commend her hard work and dedication on this important day.

● (1415)

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 28, I had the honour of visiting the Châteauguay Valley Career Education Centre, which is part of the New Frontiers School Board and located in Ormstown. After six years of hard work, they have finished their “our house” project. In partnership with Habitat for Humanity, the project will give one LEED certified house each to two families in need from the region.

During my visit, I met a dedicated team that truly wants the students and their community to thrive. The house was built for the most part by students from the centre and volunteers. The teachers trusted their students to contribute to their community.

[English]

It reflects the solidarity and the will to help one another in our region. I am really proud of this project, established in Haut-Saint-Laurent.

I congratulate the team behind the “our house” project. It is showing how important it is, on a daily basis, to get involved as citizens. It is leading by example. We thank the team.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the centre’s entire team, the volunteers, and the partners.

* * *

[English]

SHAUN WEBB

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Shaun Webb came to Ottawa as a legislative assistant in 2008, and would later serve as the regional affairs adviser for British Columbia and the North for the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, which he considered one of his greatest honours.

Shaun described Canada as “the fairest society in the world”. He was well known for his intellect, his willingness to help others, and his dedication to help make Canada a better country. One of his legacies will no doubt be the fight to claim the North Pole for Canada, the true north, strong and free.

Shaun took on Yukon and northern files as though they were his home and the people there his greatest companions. He had a brilliant intellect, with an encyclopedic memory. However, he will most be remembered as a kind, caring soul, with a heart of gold, taken far too soon.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Shaun’s mother, Felicity, whom we collectively grieve with over this immense loss. We are truly blessed to have known Shaun Webb. Rest well, my friend. His work may be done here, but his example inspires us to do all we can to preserve the blessings of our great country. We thank Shaun. God bless Canada.

*Oral Questions***JUNO AWARDS**

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend Canadian music took centre stage as our nation's capital welcomed and celebrated some of Canada's most prolific musical talent at the 2017 Juno Awards.

[Translation]

Canada is blessed to have so many talented artists who are celebrated across Canada and around the world. I rise today to recognize the hard work and dedication of all the artists in the industry who add to the vitality of Canada's music scene.

[English]

I am very proud of the Government of Canada's commitment to support this wealth of musical talent, notably through the Canada music fund, which also contributes to making landmark events such as the Juno Awards possible.

[Translation]

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I want to congratulate all nominees and winners at this year's Juno Awards.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following revelations about ISIS sympathizers working at the Montreal airport, the Prime Minister had a surprising reaction. He said we need to have a conversation. What conversation? Any employee with reported ties to ISIS needs to be fired immediately.

Does the Prime Minister think it is normal for ISIS sympathizers to work in our airports?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to be assured that the government is doing everything it can do and everything it must do to keep them safe in their homes, in their cities, at the airport, and aboard planes. We are working with great diligence to ensure that there are no safety concerns at our airports and that Canadians remain safe in their travels.

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is being dangerously naive when it comes to airport security. He was asked about four ISIS sympathizers working at the Montreal airport. What did he say about it? He said that we needed to have a conversation about whether or not ISIS supporters should be able to still work in our airports. There is nothing to discuss here. They should all be fired. No terrorist sympathizers should be anywhere near our airports.

Canadian law enforcement agencies have done their job to keep us safe. When is the Prime Minister going to do his?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that we support the Canadian law enforcement agencies in their important work in keeping Canadians

safe. We know we have to keep Canadians safe from threats of terror. That is why, whether we are talking about Canadians in their homes, in their cities, or in airports and air travel, we will do everything to make sure Canadians are safe. That is one of the fundamental responsibilities of any Canadian government.

* * *

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I doubt Canadians appreciate seeing Bombardier executives giving themselves a pay raise after the company received a subsidy from the Liberal government. On top of that, Bombardier also recently eliminated some 14,000 good jobs. Canadians are also no doubt disappointed that the Prime Minister has remained silent on this matter.

Is the Prime Minister embarrassed about giving that money to Bombardier?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how important the aerospace industry is to economic growth across the country, good jobs for the middle class, and the economic growth that the Conservative government could not provide for Canadians.

With regard to Bombardier, we gave the company a loan to support the C Series and Global 7000 aircraft projects. That will create jobs for Canadians. I am glad to see that Bombardier took action when it saw that Canadians and the government were concerned about its decision.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millionaire Bombardier executives are giving themselves a 50% raise and bigger bonuses with tax dollars. This is a company and a CEO who said that he did not even need the money the Prime Minister gave him. Also, it is a company that is firing 14,000 workers in a year.

This is not helping the middle class. This is lining the pockets of the 1% of the 1% with tax dollars. Is the Prime Minister not embarrassed? How is this helping the middle class?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to correct the member opposite. We made a loan to Bombardier, a repayable loan, that will ensure good jobs in the C Series and in the Global 7000 and assure the long-term viability of the aerospace industry in Canada, which leads to good jobs and economic growth which the previous government was not able to deliver.

We are obviously not pleased with the decision that Bombardier made around its remuneration for its executives, but we are happy to see it make decisions that are fixing that for the confidence of Quebecers and Canadians.

Oral Questions

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians work hard for their money. They feel nickel-and-dimed while the Prime Minister is taking away tax credits for their kids' sports, arts, and music lessons. He is even taking away their tax break for bus passes. Meanwhile, he is handing out millions of dollars that are being used for bonuses to Bombardier executives, all while they fire 14,000 middle-class workers.

Is this the Prime Minister's way of standing up for the middle class? Because if it is, he should sit back down.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the member opposite's attachment to the public transit tax credit. It is the only thing her previous government did for transit. Instead, we are investing \$25 billion over the next 10 years in public transit. We are also committed to evidence-based policy.

When what the member promised would happen did not happen, which was it was not an incentive that led to more public transit ridership, we looked for other ways to invest in public transit that would help everyone, including and especially low-income transit users.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked last week to find out that after receiving hundreds of millions in government funding, Bombardier executives were ready to pocket \$32.6 million in bonuses, \$32.6 million U.S. What was the Prime Minister's reaction to all this? Well, he said he "respects the free market and the choices that companies make..". So much for the Prime Minister and the little class and the middle class.

Why did the Liberal government commit to a \$400 million loan without getting any clear commitments on keeping jobs in Canada while allowing that money to be funnelled into their pockets?

•(1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a long-term loan to Bombardier that will be repayable. It was focused on creating jobs and securing the C Series and the Global 7000, which will lead to economic growth and positive job creation for the middle class in communities across this country. We know that the aeronautic industry is important for future growth in this country, and that is why we were happy to extend this loan to Bombardier.

We are, however, also pleased to see that it is moving forward on responding to legitimate preoccupations that Canadians had about their compensation structures.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Legitimate preoccupations of Canadians that obviously the Prime Minister does not share, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Are Canadians to understand that the Prime Minister signed an agreement with Bombardier that did not provide any guarantee that jobs would be protected but that allowed company executives to pocket \$32.6 million U.S. in taxpayer money?

Canadians want a government that acts in their interests, not a government that lines the pockets of wealthy CEOs.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to defend Bombardier's senior executives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for the good jobs that Bombardier created in connection with the C Series and Global 7000 projects thanks to the loan we gave the company.

We know that we need to support Canada's aerospace industry because it is a source of good jobs and economic growth. However, we are also very happy to see that Bombardier has remedied the situation regarding compensation for its executives.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal platform complained that Stephen Harper's climate plan included "arbitrary targets". The Liberals then adopted exactly those targets, and in this year's budget, they announced a cut of \$1.25 billion from their promised climate change investments. Environment Canada has now admitted that the Liberal government will not even meet Stephen Harper's targets.

The Prime Minister is keeping the same targets but just failing to meet them. Is that what he meant by "real change"?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, with our pan-Canadian framework, an historic accord negotiated with all provinces, we have, for the first time in Canadian history, presented a concrete plan to deliver on climate change targets. We are going to make concrete emissions reductions while at the same time making steps to export our resources to markets. Building both a strong economy and a protected environment is the commitment we made to Canadians. That is a commitment we are keeping.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually, the problem is that Environment Canada has just confirmed it is a commitment that they are not keeping.

[*Translation*]

Once in power, the Prime Minister adopted the exact same targets for climate change as Stephen Harper did. Last week, Environment Canada confirmed that the government will not meet these abysmal targets.

Given that the Prime Minister himself adopted the former Conservative government's targets, who will he blame now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the member seems to be having trouble with the facts.

Oral Questions

The department's analysis was based on the former government's failure to implement any measures. Since then, we have put in place a pan-Canadian framework that will enable us to deliver on our greenhouse gas reduction targets while, at the same time, creating jobs and building a better future for all Canadians. We can protect the environment while building a prosperous economy, and that is what we are doing.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talking about facts, I want to reaffirm that Conservatives invested in public transit and made announcements in Edmonton, Vancouver, and Toronto, more than the Liberal government has made, and we are proud of that. We invested a lot.

[Translation]

Public safety is extremely important and this weak government's response is inadequate. Airport security requires that we reassert the importance of security.

Why is this government not taking security seriously? Employees with access to the tarmac could access the planes. The response is completely inadequate—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transportation, I want our airports to be safe and I also want our travellers to feel safe. That is why we implemented a robust security system. People working in our airports' secure areas are checked daily. We dismissed some people because we did not find them to be trustworthy. We will continue to be vigilant. Our security system is extremely important.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what has the government done since learning that these four radicalized employees had access to high-security areas at the airport? Have these employees been fired? What steps have been taken?

Attacks are happening around the world, as we saw again today, but here, everyone is nice, everything is peachy.

What additional measures are going to be taken? Why is the minister not announcing new measures right now?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we already have a robust system in place.

People working in secure areas have a red security clearance and were subjected to a rigorous screening process by our security agencies prior to hiring. Every day, every 24 hours, we check to see that nothing has changed. If something changes, we take immediate action. Our security system is in good hands.

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after learning that there are radicalized employees at the Trudeau international airport, the Prime Minister of our country said in his response that we should have a conversation. Really, Mr. Speaker, we should have a conversation when there are security

issues at risk? This is no time for conversations. This is time for actual action. When will the Liberals fire these radicalized employees and assure that the travelling public have safe airports to go to?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Transport, I take security at our airports extremely seriously. Not only do we have a system in place that is secure, we also want to make sure that Canadian travellers feel that they are in security. I want to say that we have a very robust system in place. In the last two years, we have either prevented 1,100 people from being hired to work in secure areas or we have removed their security clearance. We are vigilant on a daily basis so that Canadians can feel they are in security, and we will continue to be vigilant about it.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Is it robust, Mr. Speaker? Robust? Let us review the evidence. These employees are visiting pro-ISIS websites. They are publishing radicalized propaganda. They are reviewing online sites about homemade explosives. The Prime Minister is dangerously naive, and so is his transport minister. They want to have a conversation. On this side, we say to fire these employees, stamp out any remaining culture of radicalization, and keep the people of Canada safe.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I want my hon. colleague to understand is that we are vigilant. We watch all of the employees who are in the secure areas, and when we discover that they may be going to websites or becoming radicalized, we take action. We immediately remove their security clearance. That is what has to be done to ensure that the people working in the secure areas of the airport for passengers, and on the tarmac, are people we can rely upon. That is why we are vigilant on a daily basis.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have approved China's acquisition of a Montreal high-tech company. The company's fibre laser technology has several applications, including military development of directed energy weapons. Our previous Conservative government had blocked the deal on the national security advice of National Defence and CSIS. Now the Liberals claim they have attached unexplained conditions to the sale, but do the Liberals realize that in their rush to please China, they are putting the security of Canada and our allies at risk?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We never have and we never will compromise on national security.

I also want to take this opportunity to highlight that we did not overturn a cabinet order. The previous government managed the process so poorly that it ended up in court. We followed a rigorous process. We examined all the facts from our national security agencies, and the law was followed.

Oral Questions

We acted on the full record and advice given to us by our national security experts. Like I said, we never have and we never will compromise on national security.

• (1435)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years, federal government departments have been hacked by a network of Chinese hackers.

Recently released documents reveal that China's hack of the National Research Council in 2014 alone cost hundreds of millions of dollars. Now the Liberals have approved the sale of this Montreal company and its sensitive defence-related technology.

Why are the Liberals spending many millions of dollars to protect our secrets from the Chinese, and at the same time they are selling our secrets to the Chinese?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of our government, the Prime Minister asked me and a number of other ministers to fully re-examine Canada's cybersecurity capacity.

That review has been ongoing now for a number of months and is leading to a much more vigorous and robust posture on the part of Canada, in collaboration with our allies, in dealing with all cybersecurity issues.

Might I just repeat, with respect to the transaction that has been referred to in the question, that all national security advice has been followed?

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since the Liberals made a promise to regulate and legalize marijuana, and in that time tens of thousands of Canadians have been subjected to arrest, charges, and convictions for simple possession. This has done real harm to future employment prospects and is burdening an already strained justice system.

Meanwhile, the Liberals continue to refuse any thought of decriminalization as an interim measure. Why is this supposedly progressive Liberal government continuing to hand out criminal records to Canadians for simple cannabis possession?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government, as we have said all along, is committed to legalization of cannabis: strict regulation, and restricting access.

We are going to be moving forward and are moving forward in a comprehensive and responsible way. Simply decriminalizing it will not achieve the objectives of keeping it out of the hands of children, and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals.

We will be moving forward, as I said, in a responsible way. Simply decriminalizing, to use the words of the member for Outremont, would be a mistake.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has finally announced that marijuana will

be legalized by July 1, 2018. How many lines are devoted to that in the budget? There are two.

There is no new investment for prevention and education for young people. There is no transition plan and the government has absolutely no intention of moving forward with decriminalization in the meantime.

Thousands of young people have been given criminal records for possession since the Liberals made their promise in 2015.

How many professional careers is the Prime Minister, who is also the Minister of Youth, willing to sacrifice in order to satisfy his ego with his flawed and improvised announcement?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, our government is committed to moving forward with the legalization of cannabis, strictly regulating and restricting access to it.

Simply decriminalizing it would not achieve the objectives that we have put forward in a concrete way, in terms of keeping it out of the hands of children and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals.

We have brought together experts in the area of public health, safety, and justice to ensure that we are proceeding on a comprehensive and responsible basis when we are going to be moving forward with the introduction of legislation.

* * *

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader says that the Liberal election promise to change the Standing Orders trumps the traditional practice of seeking agreement with the opposition parties when it comes to the rules that run this place.

I took a look at the Liberal platform, something that the government House leader might want to consider doing when she finds the time. It says, "we will work with all parties to recommend changes to House of Commons rules.."

I would say that this promise trumps the government's claim that it has a mandate to impose changes to the Standing Orders unilaterally. Is this going to be simply another broken promise?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we committed to modernizing the way that Parliament works to make it a 21st century workplace.

It is important that we have this conversation and this discussion. It is exactly what I have said from the beginning. I look forward to working with all members in this place to have a meaningful conversation, so that we can bring this workplace into the 21st century.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say one thing and do another.

Oral Questions

The Liberal government wants to unilaterally change the rules of Parliament. It is Parliamentary reform, take two. Last year, the Prime Minister blithely tried to muzzle the opposition in order to get his way. He was reprimanded for unparliamentary conduct and had to back off.

This type of arrogance is nothing new. In 1969, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, father of the current Prime Minister, said that opposition MPs were nobodies.

Does the current Prime Minister also think that all members who are not ministers or who do not think like him are nobodies?

•(1440)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign we vowed to modernize Parliament and turn it into a 21st-century workplace.

Our objective has always been to ensure that Parliament is relevant to Canadians and that the House is accountable, predictable, and transparent so that we can better serve Canadians. We look forward to hearing about the discussions that will take place between members and Canadians when the committee meets.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a year and a half the Prime Minister has shown that he does not know how to govern. His out-of-control spending, skyrocketing deficit, and ethics lapses have frankly been an embarrassment.

However, instead of owning up to his mistakes, he and his House leader are trying to take away the rights of opposition members to hold them to account.

Canadians are on to what the Liberals are trying to do. Has the Prime Minister seen the light, and will he commit that no changes will be made without the consent of all opposition parties?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to reply to the opposition House leader and to work with her. We have had meaningful conversations and I know we can continue to build upon them.

We will continue to do the important work that Canadians elected us to do. I know that we need to bring this place into the 21st century. We committed to modernizing the way Parliament works. We will continue to do this important work, hopefully together.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, in an effort to shield the Prime Minister from the mess he has created, the Liberal chair of the committee has just suspended the meeting, clearly under the instructions of the PMO. This type of hard-handed tactic is making this place toxic.

It is hard to know why the Prime Minister is being so irrational on this. What opposition parties are asking for is reasonable and it is with precedent.

Will the Prime Minister show some good judgment on behalf of all of us, and commit that no changes will be made unless we all agree?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said time and time again, this is an important discussion paper and an important conversation for all members to have. I look forward to engaging in that conversation so that we can bring this place into the 21st century, exactly as we committed to Canadians.

Our objective has always been to ensure that Parliament is relevant to Canadians, to ensure that their voices are also heard in this place.

* * *

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue to show just how out of touch they are with Canadian families. They say they are helping by making parental leave longer, but families will not receive any additional money, meaning that families with new babies would have to live on just one-third of their normal income.

What is the government's defence on why it fails to help low-income families? It is that wealthy parents need more support. That is unacceptable.

When will the government finally deliver on real change for everyday people and not just those at the top?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to remind all members of the House that this government was elected to grow the economy in order to grow the middle class and make sure that no one feels excluded from development and economic growth.

For that purpose, we put in place last year, and in last week's budget, important measures that will increase the flexibility and the inclusiveness of all programs, including the EI program.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, an Angus Reid Institute poll indicates that half of all Canadians are wary of the new powers given to U.S. border officers under Bill C-23, even though they support preclearance.

U.S. border officers on Canadian soil would be armed and have the power to conduct strip searches without a Canadian border officer present and to detain and interrogate Canadians. Bill C-23 is inconsistent with human rights and privacy rights.

[English]

I ask the minister again, if the current system works so well, which we agree, why do the Liberals insist on forging ahead with giving American officers all these new powers on Canadian soil?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note what the New Democratic Party said when the existing system was introduced a number of years ago. It said that it was no good and should be rejected. Now it is using the same line with respect to Bill C-23. The fact of the matter is that under this improved pre-clearance arrangement, more Canadians will be able to clear American customs but do so in Canada, on Canadian soil, and under the protection of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

* * *

● (1445)

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's automotive sector produces a vehicle every 14 seconds. That is 2.3 million vehicles a year. It contributes \$18 billion to our GDP and creates employment for over half a million Canadians.

My question is for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. Could you please expand on how the government plans to ensure that Canada's automotive sector will continue to be at the forefront of innovation and create those good-paying jobs for Canadians?

The Speaker: Before the minister speaks, I will remind the hon. member for Oakville to direct his comments to the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Innovation.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Oakville has done a great job as the auto caucus chair. He is correct. We are supporting the automotive sector. We extended the automotive innovation fund. We changed the terms for more investments, which resulted in a \$500-million investment by Honda in Alliston, Ontario, which will help secure 4,000 jobs. Last Thursday, along with the Prime Minister, Ford announced a \$1.2-billion investment in the Windsor Essex plant and in creating a new connectivity centre, which will help create and secure 800 jobs.

We are growing the economy. We are growing the automotive sector and creating good-quality jobs.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have forced middle-class taxpayers to loan \$400 million to Bombardier, which then axed 14,000 middle-class jobs and gave a 50% pay hike to executives. Now these billionaires have generously offered to defer these pay hikes, which means they will still get their millions before taxpayers get repaid. Will the government force Bombardier to cancel all pay hikes and bonuses until middle-class taxpayers get their money back?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we actually reduced the tax rate for middle-class Canadians by asking the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more. However, I do understand the concerns raised by the member and Canadians with regard to compensation. As members know, the company is taking action in this regard. However, more importantly, the investment that we made was to

support the aerospace sector. The \$372.5-million repayable contribution is going to help create 1,300 research and development jobs. This will create more opportunities going forward.

We will continue to support the sector. We will continue to support good-quality jobs.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are not lowering taxes; they are raising them. We have heard of this carbon tax. The Liberals are covering up the costs of their carbon tax because they know it is a disaster. A secret briefing has said that a \$300-per-tonne carbon tax is needed to meet their climate change targets.

Let us recap the Liberal carbon tax so far: more than 100,000 Albertans are out of work; 4,000 Calgary businesses have already shut their doors; and three global energy companies have left Alberta.

The Liberal carbon tax is costing Canadians their jobs and thousands of dollars a year. The Liberals need to stop the carbon tax cover-up and tell Canadians exactly how much the Liberal carbon tax will cost.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very much committed to creating a more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects the environment while creating good middle-class jobs. The pricing of carbon pollution will actually incent innovation in Canada. It will provide predictability and stability to businesses as they plan going forward. After 10 years of nothing being done in this country on the part of the previous government, our focus is on lasting action to reduce climate change, to provide a good future for our kids, and to boost innovation and create good middle-class jobs for Canadians.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families are struggling to make ends meet. The costs of heating their homes, feeding their families, and transportation have skyrocketed, and the Liberals' carbon tax is making this bad situation even worse. We already knew that the Liberals' plan was going to cost thousands of dollars. Now we learn that it will be five times that. Why will the Liberals not release the secret data we have been demanding for months? Is it because they know that most Canadian families and seniors will not be able to afford this?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that 80% of Canadians already live in jurisdictions that have implemented a price on carbon pollution. The provinces have moved forward in a thoughtful manner in order to address greenhouse gas emissions and boost innovation in this country.

I would also ask the hon. member to perhaps refer to where she actually got the number. This is an external review that looks at carbon pricing as the only mechanism that is utilized to address greenhouse gas emissions.

This government has put together a comprehensive plan that includes regulatory measures, pricing of carbon pollution, and investments in clean technology in order to address carbon emissions and to promote innovation in Canada.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try in French.

This is just more window dressing on the part of the Liberals. The *National Post* reported that Environment Canada informed the Minister of Environment that the carbon tax would fall short of meeting its stated objectives. Furthermore, it will cost Canadian families thousands of dollars. This Liberal hypocrisy is bad for Canada.

The minister needs to make decisions to protect our environment and she must table a real and effective plan to achieve the Paris agreement targets. More importantly, this plan must not be funded on the backs of Canadian families.

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has presented a plan to reduce carbon emissions and meet our Paris agreement targets. It is called the pan-Canadian framework, and I would ask the hon. member perhaps to take a look at that document.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many professional bodies in Quebec, representing everyone from lawyers to doctors to nurses, have asked for clarification regarding the definition of “reasonably foreseeable natural death” under the legislation on medical assistance in dying.

Not only is this legislation too restrictive, but it is also too vague. This situation is so bad that people who are suffering are ending their own lives. The Government of Quebec understands that people who are suffering and those who are most vulnerable need to feel understood.

Will the federal government finally realize that, too?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government passed legislation that provides a legislative framework

for medical assistance in dying and that protects the most vulnerable Canadians while giving them safe and consistent access to medical assistance in dying across the country.

As required by the legislation, we launched independent reviews of complex issues that are outside the purview of the act. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to support patient care coordination for end-of-life care.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have failed to conduct crucial national security reviews of two sensitive takeovers by foreign companies. Now the Liberals have approved a Chinese takeover of a Montreal firm specializing in sensitive laser technology that is used to produce weaponry.

The Conservatives blocked this same deal in 2015 after being warned that it jeopardized national security. Why would the Liberals refuse the previous government's decision and allow this dubious idea to take over and to proceed? What has changed, and how can they explain that to the Canadian public right now?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, we have never compromised and never will compromise on national security. Let me be clear. We did not overturn a cabinet order. The previous government mismanaged the process, which is the reason why it ended up in court. We pursued a rigorous process. We did our due diligence. We did our homework and we examined all the facts by our national security agencies.

Again, I would like to remind the member opposite that we made a decision that was in our national interests and we stand by our decision.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a coincidence that Trudeau Foundation donations have gone up 600% since the Liberals were elected. The rules are clear. Parliamentary secretaries are banned from accepting travel, yet that did not matter. We have learned that the former parliamentary secretary for immigration took a trip paid for by, wait for it, the Trudeau Foundation.

How many investigations will it take before Liberals understand they are not above the rules or the law?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I came to this country as a refugee and I have spent my career as a constitutional and human rights lawyer, promoting social justice, diversity, pluralism, and inclusion. Prior to agreeing to speak at this conference on diversity and pluralism, I proactively contacted the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, who approved the travel.

Upon my return, I submitted the proper declaration, and that information has been publicly posted for over a year. I am proud to be part of a government that continues to advance social justice, diversity, pluralism, and inclusion, not only in this country, but around the world.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that the Liberal members of Parliament see that the Prime Minister does not follow the rules, it is “monkey see, monkey do”. The member for Brampton West has accepted—

• (1455)

The Speaker: I think the member knows that there are certain words that are not helpful in the House of Commons, and I would ask her not to use them. We do not refer to other members in terms of animals. I will let the hon. member finish her question.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: The point of it is, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Brampton West accepted over \$5,000 for a trip to Tanzania from a group that lobbies the government, contrary to specific rules forbidding exactly that. Obviously, the Prime Minister is not going to make her follow the rules, because he does not follow the rules. When are the Liberals going to start following the rules?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to travel to Tanzania with some of my colleagues in this chamber to see first-hand the challenges faced by the local population. Before I left, I proactively contacted the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who approved the travel. Upon my return, I submitted the proper declaration. That information has been public since June 2016.

All members on that trip, including the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, would agree that it was important to see first-hand the challenges faced by local residents and how Canadian aid can be and was a game-changer locally.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the example set by this Prime Minister, who does not follow any rules of ethics, is now rubbing off on his parliamentary secretaries.

Two parliamentary secretaries were bribed, just like in the good old days, with trips paid for by outside groups in violation of the rules that were put in place by the Prime Minister himself in his guide entitled “Open and Accountable Government”.

Whether the money comes from a lobbyist or the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, all parliamentary secretaries who follow the rules know that they are not allowed to accept this type of trip.

Will the Prime Minister set an example for the members of his party and explain why he does not follow his own rules?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before leaving, the two parliamentary secretaries proactively contacted the Ethics Commissioner, who approved the trips. What is more, they submitted the appropriate public declarations upon their return. It is not unusual for parliamentary secretaries to go on these sorts of trips.

Oral Questions

Just ask the House leader of the official opposition, who agreed to go on a trip like this to London, England, in July 2011 when she was the parliamentary secretary for the Department of Public Safety.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has no closer friend, partner, and ally than the United States. Our government has been working closely with the new administration to ensure that our shared values, deep cultural ties, and strong integrated economies will continue to provide the basis for our strong and prosperous relationship.

The Minister of Natural Resources was in Washington last week meeting with members of the new administration. Could the hon. minister please give the House an update on the outcome of that visit?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during my trip to Washington I met with cabinet secretaries, legislators, industry leaders, and unions to deliver the message that natural resources are at the heart of our strong and lasting relationship. We talked about the Keystone XL pipeline decision, which is a good example of how energy infrastructure creates thousands of good middle-class jobs in both countries.

Our government has said from the beginning that strong working relationships are important. This trip focused on building understanding with our American counterparts for the important work to come.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is allowing his officials to bully the military ombudsman. Six months ago the ombudsman recommended that medically releasing soldiers have their incomes and medical treatments in place prior to leaving the military rather than waiting months for an income and struggling for years for their health benefits.

The attack on the military ombudsman is really an attack on the people the minister was appointed to serve. Why will the minister not implement the recommendation?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the office of the ombudsman was created to act as a mediator, to conduct investigations, and to produce reports neutrally and objectively on issues related to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Oral Questions

Last week, the ombudsman submitted a report on governance calling for greater independence. The minister committed to maintaining a positive and productive working relationship with the ombudsman. The minister encouraged the ombudsman to come to him and said he should not encounter obstacles in fulfilling his mandate.

* * *

• (1500)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities prepares for its study of the many problems related to air safety, recent events involving security issues at the Montreal airport have added yet another layer of complexity.

The minister claims that safety is a priority, but how can he say there is no problem when he fails to respond to Transportation Safety Board of Canada recommendations and will not comment on security investigation delays, random searches of employees, or the Senate report on the inadequate police presence in airports? I will stop there because I have only 30 seconds to ask the question.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, as Minister of Transport, I want air transportation to be secure, and I want the public to feel it is secure.

We have a robust system in place to ensure that it is secure. We review it daily. We also monitor the people working in secure areas of airports every day to ensure they are reliable and can continue to work there. We have mechanisms in place to ensure airport security and—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Pontiac.

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TRANSPORTATION

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians agree that developing a strong economy and protecting the environment go hand in hand. The transportation sector accounts for roughly 23% of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

Can the Minister of Transport tell Canadians what measures our government has taken and what clear commitments it made in budget 2017 in order to ensure that every effort is made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pontiac for his excellent question.

Our government is working hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector. We are also very proud of the role we played last fall in the airline industry at the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Under budget 2017, \$57 million will be invested to support work on clear greenhouse gas emission regulations in the airline, maritime, rail, and automotive sectors.

We are heading in the right direction.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, funding for the Institut nordique du Québec was a priority for the Conservatives. Four months after the election, the member for Louis-Hébert said that federal funding for the institute was on track.

Nearly 18 months later, the Province of Quebec, Mayor Labeaume, and Laval University are still waiting for the funding to be confirmed. They are running out of patience. This is another empty promise from this government.

Will the Liberals wake up and confirm funding for the Institut nordique du Québec?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to reiterate, with regard to the Institut nordique du Québec, our government was an excellent partner to Laval University, as it was to the National Optics Institute and the Port of Québec.

We are also currently working on the Quebec Bridge, which did not get so much as a coat of paint over the past 10 years. We will take no lessons from that side of the House when it comes to the Quebec City region.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we now know when the new softwood lumber crisis is going to begin.

On April 24, the countervailing duty rate should be made known and imposed on Canadian lumber sold in the United States. The Union des municipalités du Québec, like all forestry industry stakeholders, is expecting a long legal battle, once again to the detriment of the regions of Quebec.

Will Ottawa commit here and now to give forestry companies a loan guarantee to help them deal with the new softwood lumber crisis it is dragging us into?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes the challenges being faced by the forestry industry very seriously and we are working with our provincial partners to ensure its prosperity.

The federal-provincial task force met recently to discuss ways in which we can work together to protect jobs. We will continue to work with the provinces to come to an agreement with the United States and protect the jobs and families that depend on this important sector.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that, but the minister should not need to consult his notes to know that this situation is urgent. It is a yes or no question, and I expect an equally clear answer. This government has three weeks to decide to help the regions of Quebec weather the next softwood lumber crisis.

The last time, the agreement was so poorly negotiated by Ottawa that 34,000 jobs were lost in Quebec. I repeat: families lost their jobs and people had to leave our regions, including the North Shore. That is serious.

Will the government give the forestry industry a loan guarantee so that it can deal with the new crisis, or will it once again leave the regions of Quebec to fend for themselves? I would like the minister to give a yes or no answer without consulting his notes.

● (1505)

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes very seriously the challenges ahead for the forestry sector. We are working hard with our provincial partners, including in the province of Quebec, to protect jobs and ensure the long-term prosperity of this important industry. The federal-provincial task force met recently, and we discussed ways in which we can work collaboratively and creatively.

Our government, working with the provinces, continues to work hard to reach a deal with the United States to protect these vital jobs and the families that depend on them.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada had a lovely little gala last night, but French Quebec was not invited. Quebec's French-language music was not welcome, and the Minister of Canadian Heritage did not speak one word in French. As we know, Quebec and Canada are two different countries. We are only waiting for this to become official.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage see nothing wrong with French-language music being totally excluded from Canada's gala for artists and musicians?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our leadership on official languages. Naturally, bilingualism is important to the Prime Minister and to the government in general.

I am very proud to have participated, along with the Prime Minister, in this important gala promoting musical talent from across the country. Many people were able to celebrate our rich culture. Of course, when it comes to bilingualism, we can always improve how we promote French and English as the official languages within our creative industries. That is exactly what we are doing as a government.

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[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Bridgid Annissette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Privilege

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I would like my friend from Louis-Hébert to apologize for saying that we did nothing for the Quebec City region when we were in power. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just read any newspaper to see that we did a lot more than the Liberals are doing today.

The Speaker: That is a matter of debate, not a point of order.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REMARKS BY MEMBER FOR SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT-MICHEL

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise on a point of personal privilege.

I know that there have been times in all of our lives when we have done things we wish we had not, when we have said things that we wish we had not, and there have been times when we wish we could take back the words or the actions that have caused pain or hurt in others.

However, there have also been times that have actually effected change. I believe today is that day, and I hope that through the process over the past number of days we have learned and have a deeper understanding and move forward in a way that teaches us all. Moments like these are moments of opportunity, moments of teaching, and moments of learning, and if we can all learn lessons, then we are well served.

I thank my colleague for his apology and his teaching. I would also ask that he apologize to the committee members and staff, and then I ask that we move on. This is a teaching moment for all of us, so I thank the member for providing the opportunity for growth, for understanding, and for learning.

[Translation]

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have assured the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock more than once that in no way were my comments meant to offend or harass her and that if they did, then I was deeply sorry. I offered her my most sincere apologies. Today, in the House, I wish to reassure the hon. member once again that my comments were not meant to harass or offend her.

Nevertheless, I wish to stand before all my colleagues in the House of Commons to reiterate my most sincere apologies to the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock. I would like us to carry on working, as I have throughout my career, with the utmost respect and collegiality.

● (1510)

[English]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock for raising this question of privilege.

[Translation]

I thank the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for offering an apology.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a certificate of nomination and the biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Patrick Borbey as president of the Public Service Commission. I request that the nomination and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 23 petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation from the Canada–China Legislative Association respecting its participation at the 19th Bilateral Meeting in Beijing and Chongqing, People's Republic of China, March 28 to April 1, 2016.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, reports of the Canada Parliamentary Delegation from the Canada–China Legislation Association and the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the 24th meeting of the Asia–Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Vancouver, British Columbia, January 17 to 21, 2016, and at the transfer of hosting authority from Canada to Fiji for the 25th annual meeting of the Asia–Pacific Parliamentary Forum in Fiji, April 3 to April 5, 2016.

Furthermore, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, a report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation for the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the co-chairs' annual visit to Japan in Tokyo and Nagoya, Japan, September 12 to September 18, 2016.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Wednesday, April 12, 2017, the House shall meet at 3:00 p.m. when members may make statements pursuant to Standing Order 31;

not later than 3:15 p.m. oral questions shall be taken up and, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions, the House shall stand adjourned to the next sitting day;

that any recorded division which would have ordinarily been deferred to Wednesday, April 12, 2017, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business, be instead deferred to Wednesday, May 3, 2017, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business;

that the Address of Malala Yousafzai, to be delivered in the Chamber of the House of Commons at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12, 2017, before Members of the Senate and the House of Commons, together with all introductory and related remarks, be printed as an appendix to the House of Commons Debates for that day and form part of the record of this House;

that the media recording and transmission of such Address, introductory and related remarks be authorized pursuant to established guidelines for such occasions; and

that the hours of sitting and the order of business of the House on Thursday, April 13, 2017, shall be those of a Friday;

that any recorded division deferred to Wednesday, April 12, 2017, or requested on Thursday, April 13, 2017, in respect to a debatable motion, other than an item of Private Members' Business be deferred until Monday, May 1, 2017, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1515)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House on Wednesday, June 15, 2016, be concurred in.

I am pleased to comment on the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs as a new member of Parliament and a member of the committee. One of the first things we worked on in committee was how to make this place more family friendly and how we could change the way we do business here. One of the things that is most important is that we remember we are in this place representing Canadians. Therefore, it is very important we make Parliament work better for Canadians and not necessarily ourselves.

Before I get going, I would like to mention that I am sharing my time with the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

I will get into what is in the report and then I will comment on what is not in the report.

We had a number of witnesses. We held a number of meetings. For the most part, we agreed on a number of the proposed changes, but there were areas that we did not agree with. I will comment on that in a moment.

Routine Proceedings

Predictability was one that we agreed on. Predictability on when votes can happen was one of the main issues we looked into. On how to make this more family friendly, we came to an agreement that the House leaders should work together and maybe schedule votes after question period or immediately after certain events that would bring us all to the House. If members have family, have children, they would be better able to work it within their schedule. If we are here anyway, we might as well have votes after question period. That actually sounds like a good idea and was something we all supported in the procedure and House affairs committee. House leaders on all sides have done a great job in trying to make that happen, to make it work better for those with families here. That was one thing we did agree on, and I supported it.

As far as efficiency is concerned, we talked about the work calendar, about how many weeks we sit and how many weeks we are back in the riding, and making sure we do not go longer than three sitting weeks in a row. We allow for that break week or constituency week, when we are back in our ridings. We could maybe see our families, work on behalf of our constituents, and do local meetings there. That was a very important one that we all supported, again, because it made sense and made sure we would all be more efficient in our duties. It also helps Canadians as well, so we were in agreement.

On modernization, we looked at ensuring that child care facilities were available for those with children, that there was better access and that hours were modified to allow those members with children to access those services. What we found out in the committee when we did our study was that a lot of the day care hours were basically office hours and did not allow for those with children to attend a vote in the evening or attend meetings or a reception.

I was happy to learn that the Parliament of Canada did create a position within House operations so that there is now child care service provided in those off-hours. That was a good thing, because in our jobs as parliamentarians we want to encourage as many Canadians as possible to run for these positions, to run for nomination and election. It is very important to have a very diverse group in this place as we represent Canadians.

We also talked about the Board of Internal Economy examining the House bus service. We noted that those who may have injuries or disabilities were not always able to make it up to Centre Block without the help of the bus service. We agreed that we would look at the bus service and how that service is being provided and that we would also ensure the timeliness of that service during certain events that have limited its access to Centre Block. As an example, when President Obama was in town and came before Parliament, the bus service was limited, and sometimes members were not able to access this place. Especially for those we are not able to get up by their own means to Parliament Hill, that is a very important piece to remember. We always have to be thinking a couple of steps ahead in ensuring that there is that access for all members of this place. That was unanimously agreed on.

• (1520)

We also talked about work-life balance, and here is where I will get into the most important part. It is not only about reuniting the family, allowing members to be with their family and looking at how

we do what is called “travel points”. Those watching TV probably will not have too much knowledge in that field, but for us it is a system we use to get back and forth to our ridings and also to bring our families either to the riding or to Ottawa to better do our jobs. Of course when we see our family more often, that is the most basic principle. As father of a young child, I try to ensure that I see my child as much as possible among my duties either in Ottawa or back home.

One of the things that was not included in the report was the elimination of Friday sittings. When we examined the procedure and House affairs report, we questioned witnesses, brought in experts, and other members of Parliament. It was agreed that cancelling Friday sittings and extending the workday Monday to Thursday had negative effects as well. Because of that problem, it was determined by the committee that we continue the calendar as was, five days a week in Ottawa during sitting weeks. What we noticed when we did the family-friendly initiative was starting earlier and extending the hours later actually caused a number of problems and some negative unintended consequences. It was agreed by members, even those who had to travel to British Columbia and had pretty rigorous travel schedules, that the Friday sittings remain in place.

I will also take a quick snippet from my friend from Chilliwack—Hope when he spoke about the Standing Orders and talked about military families. They are not the ones asking for work-life balance. They are working hard defending our rights and freedoms across the world. They are not the ones asking for Fridays off. In our ridings we have truck drivers and business people who travel. They are not asking for Fridays off. They are not asking for a shortened workweek. They are not asking for less accountability. That is where it is so frustrating.

There is a historic precedence that when changes to the Standing Orders are made, that it is done by unanimous consent. This is where the government is going in the total opposite direction. The way the Liberals are ramming this through, using their majority to make life better for them while taking away from the opposition, is totally ridiculous.

We all were elected knowing what we were getting into. We all knew what the job entailed. There are ways to make this place family friendly. That is where the report clearly identifies a number of initiatives Parliament can take to help those with young families. However, as it said in the report, we all agreed, based on the evidence we listened to from the witnesses and experts, that getting rid of Fridays was not the right way to go about it. As I mentioned, the Liberals have decided that does not really matter, that they agreed at committee, but they will go through with this anyway because they have a majority. They will ram it down everyone's throats and we will have to live with this.

Routine Proceedings

This is not how Canadians expect democracy to work. There is historical precedence that unanimous consent is agreed to. I know the committee is adjourned until Wednesday at 4 p.m. and we will see what comes of that, but I really hope the Liberals take a step back, realize what they are doing and come into a debate with the opposition. There are number of initiatives they have proposed that we are willing to discuss. We might not agree with them all, but we are willing to discuss them. Let us have this conversation that the government House leader says needs to happen. We are happy to have it and are ready to do that. However, we cannot take away the opposition's role in this Parliament.

● (1525)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that we need to have this discussion. That is the reason the government House leader brought forward a discussion paper.

Let me pick up on one point the member referenced. He argues and articulates about Fridays. I can assure the member that I work seven days a week. I technically work on Sundays. Whether I work in Ottawa or in Winnipeg, both are of great value to me and the constituents I represent. If we could take the three hours of the half day we work on Friday and add them to Tuesdays and Thursdays, that would then allow me to attend many different events and functions in my riding of Winnipeg North.

It does not mean there are fewer hours. It would allow members of Parliament to work more in their constituencies. I would think all of us would welcome that, unless MPs are in fear of going to their constituencies. I would welcome the opportunity.

Would the member not, at the very least, acknowledge that it is important we have this discussion? For some members of Parliament, working seven days a week is very real. If we were allowed the opportunity to work a little longer on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I am in favour of that. It would give me more time with my constituents.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, we all go back to our ridings, for the most part, every weekend to attend events and engage with constituents. However, the point is, like I said in my speech, we want to have the conversation. Ramming it through without engagement from the opposition is not the way to do it. It is not in historic precedents that the government uses its majority to ram something through, changing the way this place works, so it better suits its members. Opposition parties are united upon this. We are not going to give up on this fight. We have said that we will have this conversation. We are happy to have this conversation.

The procedure and House affairs committee had an investigation, a report, and a discussion on how to make this place more family friendly. As I mentioned in my speech, it was agreed, whether we talk about staff, current members of Parliament, or people behind the scenes who worked to make the House operate, that eliminating Friday sittings would have a number of unintended consequences that the Liberals members want just because it would benefit them.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the part of the debate that has been shocking to me is that the Liberals

have elected a bunch of new members who have suddenly come up with the idea that we need to radically change Parliament.

I know the member was elected for the first time in 2015, so I have a few questions for him. Was he shocked to learn that the House of Commons, the Parliament of Canada, sat 25 or 26 weeks a year, that he would be required to travel to Ottawa to do that work, and that Parliament sat five days a week when in session? Also, was he forced to run?

● (1530)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I would like to think we all knew what we were getting into when we ran for election. I would like to think that we all did some research, found out how many days we had to be in Ottawa, how many weeks, and what the job entailed before we made the decision on whether we would seek the nomination.

I will quote my friend from Chilliwack—Hope, from his speech before Parliament. He stated:

Members are asking about taking Friday off, getting back to their ridings, and being here only Monday to Thursday. What would happen in most situations is that we would all go to work on Friday. We would be working in a different location, and there would be less accountability here for the government, with one fewer day for question period and one fewer day for legislation to be examined. It would do nothing for work-life balance.

That is an important point to note.

I should also point out that the Prime Minister is trying to attend only one day a week. Attending question period for 45 minutes is the Prime Minister's idea of a job well done, that he will show up to work in Parliament, be accountable to his peers for 45 minutes a week, and then call it a day. That is unacceptable.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions I would like to put to the member.

I am a member on PROC. Essentially, the motion before PROC is to start the discussion. This is to have a discussion about how we can make this place more effective and more efficient, how to bring it into the 21st century, so we can use our time better. As a new member, there are definitely ways we can make our time better here, and that is the discussion ahead of us now. How are we spinning this into certain conclusions, running to conclusions that this is about Fridays off? It is not about Fridays off. Let us have the discussion to determine whether we will be here all day Friday. We are in a position now where we cannot even enter into the dialogue, we are being stopped.

What does the member have against opening this up, having a discussion, bringing evidence in so we can make this place more efficient and more effective? Because we can do better than we are currently.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and her work on the committee. The member opposite is on step B and we are on step A. We are happy to have this conversation, but the first thing is that we as the opposition need some assurances that the Liberals will not just ram those changes down our throats. They want to have the Prime Minister here for only 45 minutes a week and us here for only four days a week when Parliament is sitting. We want to have discussion on that, but we may not agree on it.

One thing I should point out for the member opposite is none of that was in the Liberal campaign platform. If the Liberals ran on a campaign of working four days a week during parliamentary sittings, I do not think they would be sitting on that side of the House.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, a committee on which I have served for over a decade. I am currently the longest-serving member of that committee. I am rising to speak to this not because of anything intrinsically important in this particular report. It is the 11th committee report. We have had a number of other committee reports before and since, and this one is of just average importance. I am doing it because this is our way, on the opposition benches, of drawing attention to the fact that the committee, and indeed this entire place, operates with the sword of Damocles hanging over its collective head.

The Liberals have proposed a motion in committee, a motion my colleague from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas mentioned just a moment ago, a motion that, far from opening up debate actually ensures that debate will be shut down by a definable, very brief deadline on all the Standing Orders, which is that the committee will report back to the House on all matters dealing with the Standing Orders by June 2.

As a practical matter, no committee ever comes to an agreement without having procedural meetings that take some time on the day it makes its report, so we are actually looking at meetings that would have to wrap up, in practice, in terms of the new substance, some time much earlier than that, probably a week or two weeks at best.

The report would be imposed using closure within the committee, something committees do not normally do, something that is not normally tolerated in committee. That closure or guillotine or termination of debate is the reporting deadline of June 2. It is very brief. That is the fundamental issue here.

We hear talk from Liberal members here of a discussion paper that was produced. We have a discussion paper. Let us just discuss what is in that discussion paper. We have a discussion paper that is, I believe, 12 pages long, put out by the government House leader on March 10, right before our most recent break week but one. The very same day, the member for Bonavista introduced it.

I actually checked by going back and finding out when the paper was submitted by the House leader and when the motion was submitted to the committee clerk by the member for Bonavista. One hour and 11 minutes later, it might have been two hours and 11 minutes, but you will see my point, Mr. Speaker, the member for Bonavista produced a motion to impose closure. It is a motion that is almost a page long. It contains five subsidiary points, one of which

has a subordinate list. We are to believe that the member for Bonavista produced this motion, all on his own, after he brought forward the government's paper, and got it translated, because the member is not bilingual, and got it to the clerk all in the space of a couple of hours.

What was really going on was that there was a great rush to ensure that this could be submitted two sleeps, as we say, two government business days, prior to the return of the committee to business so that it could be introduced at an in-camera hearing and the government could then push through this profoundly undemocratic motion at that committee hearing.

I raised the issue in the House and said that the Liberals were about to push this through at an in-camera meeting, and to his credit, the deputy government House leader said he would like this meeting to go in public, and in public we were able to raise our concerns, thereby forestalling this way of doing things.

However, if that motion were withdrawn, the dialogue could begin. The dialogue can begin, in fact, if the government will instruct its members on the committee to vote in favour of an amendment I put forward, and that amendment says, simply, "Nothing will come out of this committee as a recommendation to the government without the unanimous consent of all the members of the committee", which in practice means without the consent of the New Democrats and the Conservatives as well as the Liberal Party members.

If the government members really want a discussion, if their words are sincere, the government has a number of options.

● (1535)

First, the government could agree to the motion, the amendment I proposed in committee, saying that we will not move forward anything without unanimous consent. That would allow us to get something done by June 2. As a practical matter, I think we would need a great deal more time to go through all the Standing Orders. We could start that work now, if that is the government's choice. That is the first thing it could do.

Second, the Liberals could withdraw the motion put forward by the member for Bonavista. After I do not know how many hours of debate in committee, it should be apparent to them that there is not all-party support for that motion, to put it mildly. Therefore, it could be withdrawn.

Third, the Liberals could move forward with some other motion. I actually submitted another motion to be ready to go in case the government did decide to withdraw its motion. It is a motion that calls for the discussion, on a piecemeal or subject-by-subject basis, of the various items on the government's agenda. There is nothing wrong with discussing Friday sittings. To the government's credit, it not only says that it thinks we should consider getting rid of Friday sittings. It also says it wants to consider the possibility of having the House sit all day long on Friday, making it a full day. There might be a willingness to move in that direction. However, to make the obvious point, we cannot do both of those things at the same time. Presumably, there needs to be a discussion of both of those.

Routine Proceedings

Also, with regard to the Prime Minister's question time, changing the times of votes, and all the other issues that are discussed in the House leader's proposals, if we go through them, we see that they include topics as disparate as sittings of the House; electronic voting; the House calendar and sitting further into the end of June and starting earlier in September and January; how routine proceedings are conducted; and changes to private members' business, an item which, on its own, in 2003, occupied a similar committee of the House long enough for it to produce several reports over the course of a year. It includes prorogation, something that would be a vexed question to deal with, because it deals with crown prerogatives, so that would take a fair bit of time, some nuancing, and some expert testimony to deal with. It also includes time allocation, how question period is done, omnibus bills, and the management of committees. These are all topics. There is no way we could discuss these things by June 2.

That would be true even if it were not also true that our committee has been charged by the Minister of Democratic Institutions to, by the middle of May, complete its hearings on the Canada Elections Act. The Minister of Democratic Institutions spoke very eloquently to us on March 9, one day before this paper was released, explaining why it was important for us to get this done. She said that Elections Canada could not respond to the recommendations we would be making and that she, the minister, would be incorporating into government legislation, on a short-term basis. They need to have enough time before the 2019 election to put these things in place. The minister needs to introduce legislation in September. That means that we need to report back to her by the end of May, or the beginning of June at the latest, exactly the same deadline that has been foisted upon this committee by the motion from the member for Bonavista.

Therefore, the most sensible thing of all would simply be to withdraw the motion. Having said that, I want to make an amendment to this motion.

I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"The 11th Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented on December 16, 2016, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with instruction that it amend the same to clarify that in all of its reviews of the procedures and practices of the House, the committee will only make recommendations to the House that enjoy the support of all the members of the committee."

• (1540)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment is admissible. We will now go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

• (1545)

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulated the hon. member several years ago. He did something that does not happen very often. He managed to change the Standing Orders in this House with a private member's motion. It was on the election of the Speaker. I voted for it at the time, but over 40% of the people in this House did not.

The member just moved an amendment and alluded to the fact that any changes to the Standing Orders require unanimous consent.

When he changed the rules in this House, did he seek unanimous consent? Yes or no.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I stand corrected. It was, in fact, June 15, 2016. My apologies for that. I hope that correction is accepted.

The other thing I did wrong was that I got the member's riding incorrect. I said it was Bonavista. Of course, I would have said Coast of Bays had I been keeping up on riding names. Unfortunately, as I know from bitter personal experience, even someone as elevated as the Speaker of the House of Commons can occasionally get the names of ridings muddled up. The people of the County of Lennox and Addington, who I formerly represented, were frequently the ones who suffered because of that.

Turning to the question the member raised, he has an interesting point. He is saying that the motion I proposed, which was adopted by the House, under which the Standing Orders were changed to cause the Speaker to be elected by preferential ballot, was not done by unanimous consent. He is quite right. There were members opposed in the then governing party, the Conservatives, my party. There were members opposed and in favour in the NDP and likewise in the Liberal Party.

In fact, that was the only vote I am aware of in the last Parliament that was done without any party discipline at all. That is actually a very healthy way of dealing with something that comes via the novel approach of private members' business.

I will say this. That approach is not remotely like the approach the member's government is attempting, of ramming through changes with the absolute opposition of the other parties. That is the big difference here.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston that we need consent, that is a consensus, preferably unanimity, in this place for changing the Standing Orders.

I would not blame some Canadians if their eyes glazed over at the notion that it matters how we vote or how much time we have for debate. However, I think it is fundamental to this place when we are changing the rules with basically a very wide range of changes. I have opened them up with further changes this day. I tried to send to members' personal emails a paper suggesting that we consider the climate impact of our schedule in this place, something I think the current government would want to think about, and that we consider the role of individual MPs and not just political party power. This place, our Parliament, is fundamentally about members of Parliament who, at least in theory, are equals.

Does my hon. colleague think the growing role of political parties undermines the role of individual members in representing their constituencies?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, as the time left is short, I will avoid the elaborate analogy I was working on between this process and electoral reform. I was going to provide a colourful illustration of just how people can be engaged in an apparently technical issue by pointing to that issue and citing the hon. member's extensive experience in this.

Routine Proceedings

I am not sure I am answering the member's question exactly, but I think this gets to the nub of what she is getting at here. There is a process we have had in place. It was there during the Harper government. It was there during the Chrétien government. If we look back, we can find elements of it going back as far as November 1867, when the very first Standing Orders of the House of Commons were adopted.

What happened at that time was that an all-party committee was struck. It brought its report back to the House. The report was not adopted by consensus. Rather, the leader of the opposition raised concerns about the report. Those were then put into the report, and amendments were made. That was adopted by unanimous consent.

This practice has allowed us to have increased openness and flexibility for members, opposition parties, and also people who are treated as independents in this place. Moving away from that is always a bad idea. I would strongly say that in this case, it is a very bad idea indeed.

• (1550)

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand here to do this. I appreciate what my colleague from Bonavista—Burin—Trinity said about our riding names and how they have changed and evolved over time. I no longer represent beautiful Bonavista.

Speaking of evolution, let us talk about how we have evolved in many ways, but we have much further to go in order to modernize our Parliament as it is right now. This has been a discussion for quite some time. In certain cases in a miniscule way we have crept along inch by inch on certain individual initiatives. The member who just spoke talked about how we changed the election of the Speaker. We had a member from the NDP who instilled e-petitions, which I think was one of the best things that I voted for regarding motions to change the Standing Orders over the past little while.

By way of illustration, as the president of Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, I hosted several members of the European Parliament. They were here from 2 p.m. until about 3:30 p.m. and managed to take in several things, such as Standing Order 31 statements and oral questions. They also took in voting, because we had a vote after question period. I asked the member from the Netherlands what she thought of the whole 90 minutes. She said it was a contrasting tale of two stories. She said, "You debate like it is the 21st century, but why do you vote like it is still the 19th century?"

Most legislatures around the world have some form of electronic voting or modernized voting. The vote of each individual member is recorded. In some places they have an ID card and members press a button "yes" or "no". In the British Westminster system, members line up in different aisles as to which way they are voting. Voting is done electronically in the American Congress. Not very many have a way of voting such as we do. If it is a legislature of about 20 people, that is fine, but when it is a legislature of 338 members, it is time-consuming. I know Canadians want to see how their members of Parliament vote, but some may say there are better ways to do it. That being said, during the current process that we have introduced in the motion, we have heard from several people, even members of

their own party, conflicted as to how they feel about it. There is nothing wrong with that, because that is how it should be.

I use the example of electronic voting only because I have enjoyed the discussion so far and I want this discussion to continue. Let me illustrate my current frustrations with this, and I hope that we get beyond this impasse, this filibuster and get into the study itself.

Let me clarify by saying this first and foremost. If I were to stand in the House and look at my colleagues in the NDP and say how dare they do this filibuster, I would be very insincere. After 10 years in opposition dealing with the fair or unfair elections act, I know firsthand that doing a filibuster is a right of every member in the House, to the point where I even would say a lot of it I have been enjoying, quite frankly. I just wish we could take some of this debate that has been playing out in this filibuster and move it into the study, because I want to hear from witnesses from the outside.

There are several bones of contention. Let me address the unanimity aspect of this. The opposition members cite the McGrath report. I am going to pick on the McGrath report because it is a shining example, as they have said, of how it should be. I agree that it should be that way in this report. We should be able to come out with a unanimous report citing several ways to make major changes. However, my motion is to start the study by which we can get into a unanimous report, which I hope we can. The McGrath report which is from 1984, the way the motion is written, it is very complex. It never asks for unanimous consent; it just asks for a report to modernize the House of the day.

• (1555)

The result of that motion was a unanimous report, thank goodness. If we had to pin this down to unanimity, I am not sure that we would have a full debate.

I could debate the idea about the June 2 deadline that I put in my motion. I am willing to talk about that. I have not reached that point yet, but I certainly would like to.

I want to put to rest right away one of the other points which the member brought up earlier. She said that my motion was developed within two hours of reading or tabling the discussion paper. That is not true. Three days prior to the release, the minister showed me the discussion paper. I read it, took it in, took my notes from the take-note debate in October with my own views, and in that period I was able to draft a motion. It was not a two-hour episode. Yes, I saw it before other members. That is true. I am being honest about it.

I want the committee to study this and I want it done quickly so that we can provide the House with what we have discovered through our own testimony, which was far more robust than I had figured because of some of the input from the Conservative Party, the NDP, and from my own party. I have rather enjoyed it. For goodness' sake, for two hours we talked about the Magna Carta. To say that I was absolutely enthralled and gripped with it would not be entirely true but would be pretty close. I forget the name of the riding of the individual who brought it up. I only know him by name. I must say it was a good discussion which I enjoyed very much.

Routine Proceedings

There were several discussions about how other parliaments, particularly the Westminster model in Australia, New Zealand, our own of course, and other jurisdictions, managed to get through the day when modernizing their parliaments.

I talked about electronic voting. I would like to talk about another aspect that was not brought up during the campaign but was in the discussion paper for a very good reason. This was brought to my attention some time ago. It is all about programming.

Some people looking at this would say that I was just defining what the debate is going to be. What happened is that back in the late 1990s there was a great deal of frustration about debate. Debate would go on for so long and then it would end on time allocation. The U.K. MPs call it the guillotine, which is probably a more apt description. Debate would go along; the guillotine would drop, and then it was done. It is frustrating for those in the opposition because they do not know when it is going to happen.

The U.K. decided that after second reading, the debate would be programmed such that they would know how long they would have for report stage, the third stage into the vote. That way each party would be able to present its arguments the way they want to. However, there was a frustrating part. Let us say there were three elements to a debate, with number three being the important one. Members want to build narrative into their debate by saying, "This is bad, and this is bad, but this is really bad." By the time they got to the second point, all of a sudden the debate would be guillotined and over.

The U.K. has brought in programming, and surprisingly, even a vast majority of members on the opposition side agreed that it was a sensible way to handle legislation. It was not automatic. It required a discussion among the House leaders and if they agreed, debate would be programmed after second reading.

One of the other issues in the discussion paper is about omnibus legislation. Could the Speaker have a more active role in dividing up the omnibus legislation to make it more palatable, certainly to make it more discernible in several ways or in certain areas? For example, a particular topic would be cleaved off into this type of legislation and another topic would go another way.

My hon. colleague from the Conservatives brought up a good point which I think is a precursor to this study, and asked, is that possible? Does the Speaker have the authority? Maybe he or she does; I do not know. It is worth discussing, because as we know, omnibus legislation was a factor that weighed heavily among parliamentarians in the last Parliament and we discussed it quite a bit.

Those are a few elements of the discussion paper that we got into.

● (1600)

There were several aspects that we campaigned on as a party, and we would like to go forward with them, obviously. It is something we campaigned on and something we would like to do.

One of the issues brought up was Fridays. It seems pretty rich when we say to the House, "We don't want to work on Fridays, but if you look at the situation, we never said we wouldn't."

Here is my problem with Fridays, and I hope the opposition can hear this. It is a half day. It is not a very effective day. Let us take effective hours in this Parliament and apportion them either to other days or make Friday a full day. Those are the options that we wanted to put in front of the committee. They said, "Canadians show up to work on Friday." That is true. Canadians show up to work at 8:30 in the morning. We show up at 10 a.m. Canadians go to work in September. We do not, according to that logic. Canadians show up to work in January. We do not. Why not? Why can we not apportion some of these hours to those months?

My father was an electrician in a mill for 43 years. Many years ago the company came to him and said, "Instead of working eight-hour shifts, why don't you work 12, and that way you can spend more time with your family on the other four days? Instead of two days off, you get four." What an idea. The difference here is that my father had some time off on those four days.

Let us be quite honest. There is another part we are missing. I do not know about the other members, and I am not presupposing they do because I know we all do, but my time away from Ottawa is spent working, attending meetings and constituency events, which is where we get our feedback. In many cases, trying to get from here to Newfoundland, I might as well just be going to Iceland, for goodness' sake. It takes about the same amount of time to get there. There is the travel that is involved. Instead of calling them break weeks, they truly are constituency weeks.

I saw the Twitter feed from my hon. colleague from Avalon last week. My goodness, I do not think he slept in four days. It was just a constant ream of work. The man is seven feet tall but he should be five foot two he ran around so much in his riding. It is unbelievable. He is a hard-wording member.

I just wanted to bring these points to the fore, but I will conclude with this point. This is a motion to do a study. All the things that members have been saying about unanimity, we want and desire, but what if we put out this report and it has to be unanimous and only one thing is agreed upon? It is a report of just one thing to do. There is so much discussion that can be had. There is so much to talk about that would not be included in this report. That is the unfortunate part. They might not agree with the logic, but in the past, as I have said before, from the very beginning, if we are going to use a report that has received unanimous consent, the motion did not call for unanimous consent and I wonder why. The member who changed the Standing Orders, who just talked about unanimous consent, not once asked for unanimous consent when he changed the rules.

There was a member from the NDP who also changed the rules on e-petitions. He did a good job and I supported it, but he did not ask for unanimous consent.

Routine Proceedings

To achieve unanimous consent is the aspirational goal for which we strive. I understand the politics of this. I understand the Facebook stuff. I understand the filibuster. That is one of the privileges of serving both sides of the House, not because we think we can argue out of both sides of our mouth, but because we have a different perspective of both sides. We know what it is like to govern and we know what it is like to be in opposition. I stand on both principles. I participated fully in a filibuster, and I will sit here and sit in front of a filibuster against me. I even spoke in the filibuster. It is my motion that they are filibustering, and I spoke to it. I do not know if we would call that a “counter-buster” or what the heck we would call it. The reason I spoke to it is we had several hours of fantastic information that was put forward, even in a filibuster. Now go figure that.

• (1605)

Here is why I want to get to the study. There are so many people out there who are not sitting in this House and who can give us great information as to how we can modernize this place. This discussion paper is not a motion in front of the House saying that the majority rules, we vote for it or that is it.

That is what happened before. The perpetrators of the unfair elections act crawled on this high horse and said, “You can’t do that.” We are not putting something in the House to vote on now; we are putting a motion to study the possibility of changing the Standing Orders.

I ask members this. At what point does that involve ramming things through? It is not. This is discussion. If opposition members do not like the programming that I just talked about, well, I like it. If they do not like it, they should not support it and should argue against it. I have already acquiesced, on many occasions, about some of the arguments that were put forward, such as omnibus legislation and all of that.

Again, if we take into account what we have done in the past, here is what I like. I liked the McGrath report, because it was unanimous. It was not required, but it was unanimous. We had a take-note debate, started by the Liberals. We did not ram through anything; we said we should have a debate and discuss these ideas. Now we have this motion, together with the discussion paper, some of which we may not even support, but it certainly is worth talking about. This is nowhere near what it used to be.

If we want to talk about precedents, opposition members say they have always acted this way. That is not so. In the early 1990s, Brian Mulroney slapped a motion in this House saying that the Standing Orders needed to be changed. Did he do a motion? No. Did he do a take-note debate? No. Did he do a discussion paper? No. It was, “Here are the changes. Vote for it. We have the majority, so good luck.”

Mr. David Christopherson: That sounds familiar.

Mr. Scott Simms: That is not what we are doing now, Mr. Speaker. That is an absolutely insincere argument.

Mr. David Christopherson: That is not insincere.

Mr. Scott Simms: That is totally insincere, Mr. Speaker, to the point where all they have to do is start this study and get moving. That is all I ask.

Each and every time that we have done this, the opposition talks about the precedents, and there are a lot of them. I do not want to take this off the rails, in the sense that I do not want people to think that we are against a unanimous report. We would all love to have one, all of us. It is an aspirational goal that we believe in.

Mr. David Christopherson: We are good. We are getting there. It is not an aspirational goal.

Mr. Scott Simms: That is right, Mr. Speaker.

However, in the discussions, like I said, I want to talk about all of these things. Before that discussion took place, it was a race to a filibuster and a race to Facebook. That is their right. They can do that, and that is fine. However, I hope we can get through this, because I think modernizing Parliament is sadly overdue. We should do this in all aspects of programming, with voting, and all the matters we can modernize to make this better for all members of Parliament, now that we have 338 members.

That being said, I want to thank all members for listening to me on this. Unanimity would be a wonderful thing. Despite the fact that sometimes I get pretty angry about it, I certainly want that. This place deserves it, and, more than that, Canadians deserve it.

• (1610)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame for his remarks. He was doing pretty good there for a while, and then he got into a couple of rough bumps.

I know time is tight on these questions and answers, but there are a couple of things that absolutely scream out to be responded to. The first is, the member talked about the McGrath report and holds it up as something they want to do. In that report, they talk about how proud they are of the fact that they did not have to have any votes. The member says they are not saying that there have to be votes, though I am not really sure. It depends on what part of his speech we are referring to, as he kind of bounces around.

Here is the reality. There is no open, give-and-take, free discussion, as we would all like to have, if the government insists on retaining the right to ram it through if it does not agree with the proposed unanimity. This is the issue. The government keeps saying it does not know why the opposition is doing this, why it is causing such turmoil. By the way, they were the ones who forced it 24-7, not us. They wonder why we cannot have a nice discussion, why we cannot just talk about these things.

Let me ask the hon. member this question. If he were prepared to guarantee that there would be no ramming through, under no condition would the government believe it had the right to ram something through, would he accept that then we could have a fair and informed discussion? He must recognize that as long as the government retains the right, or believes that it retains the right to unilaterally ram it through, the idea of having nice, equal, fair-minded discussions is just not going to happen, for obvious reasons.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the member has to back up a minute. What was the very first thing that I said? It was that he too uses the McGrath report. I agree with all the things he has said, all the wonderful things that are in this are real gems, about no votes and that sort of thing. That is great. However, if we look at the set-up for the report, it did not restrict these people into doing that. It started out on a good foot. It basically said that this is what they wanted to do and all the things they wanted to talk about to modernize the House of Commons where unanimity was not required. That was a set-up from the very beginning. That was what that was.

Mr. David Christopherson: They did not put a time on it.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, Mr. Speaker, they did put a timeline on it.

Mr. David Christopherson: It was not two months.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the very last sentence of that motion talks about June. The member knows it. I know it. The last sentence in that motion requires a timeline. If he is going to argue it, he has to read it first.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for offering some clarification. It is very important. Passions do rise here, because this is an important issue for Canadians.

As a member on the committee, we want to ensure that Canadians understand exactly what is happening. I am very happy to hear my hon. friend make very clear that this is about having the discussion. This is about inviting witnesses to come so that the committee can make best practices suggestions, evidence based, on how we move forward.

I have two questions for my friend. The first is with respect to the comment about this being expedited and trying to make it happen overnight. I know, as a committee member, that I am willing to work extra hours to make this happen. If we need further time, would my friend be willing to say yes to that? If we need further time to make a good decision, would we do that?

Second is with respect to efficiency and effectiveness. How important is this for Canadians? Can my friend give examples of how we are not being as effective and efficient as we could be, because I know as a new member that we could do much better.

This is exactly what the committee wants to undertake, so that we can fulfill our promise to Canadians, so that every minute we spend here, we are making the absolute best use of our time so we can serve Canadians to the best of our ability.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, this is one of those times when I hear an intervention and I just want to say that is a good point and then sit down. However, I will not. I will elaborate by saying this. There were several times in this House, and I point to the opposition because I mentioned two earlier, when I kind of picked on the opposition. I am reticent to do that because I supported both of those initiatives. I thought it was the right thing to do.

Now we are looking at more holistic changes, in a much broader fashion, for the discussion. If we look at it through private members' motions, they start talking about changing, but we do not have a lot of time by which we can examine fully some of these concepts we are talking about. Here, we can. When we look at changes, we can get witnesses to come in to talk about some of the concepts. These

witnesses are people who have not just read about it, they have been through it. They are parliamentarians and former parliamentarians from around the world who can discuss that they tried programming, that they did electronic voting, that they did many of these things. In doing so, they can say that here are some of the snags.

The bad thing is that when countries come last, they are plodding along and are the last ones to do it. However, one of the good things is that we can take from the good and the bad from everyone else who has done it, in cases such as New Zealand, Australia, certainly from Westminster, and maybe Scotland as well, because the Scottish parliament, being fairly new, adopted some best practices as it started. That is one of the things we can do to modernize, and I hope that is the type of discussion we will get into when we do this study.

• (1615)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame this. He indicated in his lengthy remarks that he is not willing to negotiate on everything in his motion, but he is willing to negotiate on the deadline. I have the feeling that would not be enough for me and my colleagues, but it does raise a question.

The member introduced his motion on March 22, and about two weeks have gone by. We will be returning to this on April 5, so that is two weeks gone. If we push back two weeks from June 2, we are at June 16. As well as now having some time lost on this important business, we have the important business of changes to the Canada Elections Act. This is a matter which the very day before the member introduced his motion, the Minister of Democratic Institutions said it must be rushed through committee by the end of May. That is a schedule that conflicts entirely with our timeline.

Therefore, my question is this. Would the member be willing to consider moving back his deadline to the autumn in order to allow us to properly fulfill that mandate regarding democratic institutions while still dealing with the Standing Orders in more detail? I would point out that would leave us the entire summer to have meetings and discuss this.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I would be willing to discuss it, but I do not think that was in their amendment. Their amendment was solely concerned with the idea of unanimity, if I recall. That is what we are on right now, which is the amendment.

However, when I mentioned earlier about discussions of the time spent, I was talking about the time during the day that we can sit, a time throughout the week, five days a week. As a matter of fact, the finance committee does this during pre-budget consultations. It goes for five days a week and extends the hours. I see nothing wrong with that, unless maybe Fridays are out of the question for the member. I would be willing to sit on a Friday. I am not sure about my colleagues, but there we go.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member had a lengthy speech. He is well versed in parliamentary process and knows the material very well. In his experience, he mentioned understanding fully the importance of parliamentary privilege for members, having sat on both sides of the House, and the importance of each member who has won an election representing her or his constituents.

The member commented on the high quality of the debate that is taking place at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and wished that some of that would be part of the discussion itself. However, does the member not see that it is entirely within his power and his colleagues' power to make that happen, by simply either adopting the amendment that is before the committee or withdrawing the motion and then beginning the debate where we can discuss modernizing this place?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate where my colleague is coming from by talking about the beginning of a debate, but we already began this debate. It started in October. All through that period we talked about it at committee. Now we are moving a motion to begin this discussion.

A take-note debate took place, and I really enjoyed that. Now we are into a discussion over how to have the study looked at. We can use the time wisely to do all that without withdrawing anything. The member talks about the amendment, but we have not voted on the amendment yet because the floor has not been ceded.

I appreciate what the member has said, however, we are to a point now where we are ready to move on this to say that in committee we want a study and provide recommendations to the House in order for the minister and other parties to consider it.

• (1620)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to concurrence in the committee's report, as well as the amendment to send it back to committee, and importantly to affirm and clarify that, in all of its reviews of the procedures and practices of the House, the committee will only make recommendations to the House that enjoy the support of all members of the committee. As I am sure all members know, that has been the subject of some debate pertaining to some other issues before the committee.

It may be that, at various times, some members in the past in Parliament may have made arguments as to why it might not make sense to always proceed on the basis of all-party support. I am not sure I would agree with those arguments. However, I want to speak to them because it is important both to this motion and to other matters at PROC. In the particular circumstances of this Parliament and where we have come from October 2015 until now, it is important that if parties are to engage in discussions, whether it is about family friendly or other rules about the House and changing them, opposition members have some assurances from the government that before setting out on that discussion it will have a proper decision-making process for the end of that discussion. What we do not want to do is create a pretext for the government to ram through whatever changes it would like, whether with respect to family friendly or other changes to the rules of the House.

That is why, notwithstanding any general arguments about why we may not in every case want all-party support for this or that or the

other thing, in this Parliament it is important we have those reassurances. Whatever good faith or trust the government might have asked for at the beginning of its mandate has been burned up by the government. It took a serious hit about a year ago when it decided to introduce Motion No. 6, which was an ugly motion that sought to handcuff Parliament and make it a creature essentially of the government. Whenever something was going on that the government did not like, it would simply be able to shut down debate or adjourn the House, and to do it at will. That is why we see arguments from the government on some issues about programming bills, for instance, because it wants more predictability in the House.

Motion No. 6 had nothing to do with a predictable schedule. It had nothing to do with making the hours that we stay or leave predictable for the sake of members with young families or for the staff of members with young families. Therefore, there is good cause to suspect that when the government talks about making the House more predictable for the sake of families, really what it is doing is using the arguments of predictability and using young families as a screen for doing whatever is convenient to it at the time.

Because I will be splitting my time with the member for Hamilton Centre, he will have more to say on that, so I will leave that alone for now.

I do not think predictability is a real value that the government is promoting. It is cherry-picking when it talks about predictability. It is cherry-picking when it is convenient for it to have concern for members with young families and when it will not. That was part of Motion No. 6. I raise that argument just as one example. If people are just listening through the news and are not in this place every day, they do not see the way the government operates on a daily basis, so it sounds like a reasonable argument. If they have a family, it would be nice to know whether they would leave at 6 p.m. or 8 p.m. When the government had Motion No. 6 in its mind, it had nothing to do with that.

Another issue that pertains to this, because it has to do with democracy and how we set the rules for democracy, was on electoral reform. Again the government said that it needed opposition members to engage it in good faith. It even went so far as to tell members what they should or should not do, which the government ought never do. They were told to go into their constituencies, hold town halls, and then report those findings back to government. Many MPs on this side of the House did that in good faith. The results that came through that process and through the extended travelling of the committee, which heard from a number of experts and ordinary Canadians themselves, was they wanted a change in the voting system.

• (1625)

Then the government went further. In supplementary estimates, it asked for over \$3 million extra to conduct a survey. As we found out later, that was the cost of the Liberals breaking a promise they never intended to keep, but not before they caused Canadians to have to pay a considerable amount of money for them to get to where they felt comfortable breaking that promise, not because of what they heard from Canadians, but simply because they realized they would not be able to blame it on someone else.

Routine Proceedings

Those kinds of moves, whether it is Motion No. 6 or whether it is on electoral reform, really undermine the sense of trust that is necessary to move forward with democratic reforms in a country. Whether it is changing the way we vote or whether it is changing the rules in this place, members want to know they are dealing with a government that is actually negotiating in good faith. I put to the House that those two examples go a long way in explaining why all opposition parties are not prepared to extend the benefit of the doubt to the government, as we did on the electoral reform file. It only gets so many chances to engage in those processes in good faith.

What the opposition parties are asking for when it comes to reforming the rules of this place is quite reasonable, particularly in light of that lack of trust and good faith. We want the government simply to commit to what has been done many times in the past. When we are to change the rules of the House, we sit down with the other parties and say that whatever the government goes forward with will be something all parties of this place agree to, and that is it. That is not a lot to ask for.

There are a number of examples where that has been done before. That includes the McGrath committee. If anyone wondered if all-party consent would lead to gridlock and not being able to get anything done, I would remind the House that it was on the McGrath committee that we had a Speaker elected by secret ballot for the first time, which was interesting. It was a major reform of the House. That was not the case before the McGrath committee. It was out of the McGrath committee that we got votable private members' business, granted not in the form that we do it now where every PMB becomes votable if it makes it to the floor of the House. It was out of the McGrath committee, which required all-party consent, that we actually got some of those first reforms.

There is the idea that we cannot make substantive, meaningful reform to the rules of the House because we require all-party consent. On the other side of the coin is that somehow the only way to make meaningful and substantive changes to the rules of the House and to improve the functioning of this place is to have a government come in with less than 40% of the vote, steamroll the opposition parties and make whatever rules it wants, whether it is with respect for what we are talking about today, which is some of the proposals around family-friendly things, or other rules of the House.

If anyone gets up and says that the only way to make the House more modern, more efficient and substantially change the way we do business here is by having a strong-handed government come in and whip this place into shape, it is not true. Members of all parties traditionally have been willing and able to get together and hammer out new ways of going forward that represent the changing trends of society and work-life balance and everything else. It has been done.

The idea that somehow it will take a strongman government to come in and make things right in a place that has its challenges but overall operates pretty well is not on the table. It is particularly funny coming from a government that has one of the most meagre legislative agendas we have seen in a long time. The Liberals have been in government for a year and a half, and they have only seen fit to introduce about 40-some bills. Most of those are just regular procedural bills that have to do with the estimates process. Some of those are bills that were because of decisions of the Supreme Court,

which required the government to make a decision. Then a third major category of those bills is simple repeals of Harper-era legislation. It is not like it took a lot of time to prepare, and with the exception of some of my colleagues on the opposition benches from the Conservative Party itself, those repeals tend to have pretty widespread support here in the House of Commons. When we take those three categories of bills together, what is left in terms of an authentic legislative proposal of the government is not very much.

The idea that we somehow have to overhaul the rules of the House to make it easier for government to ram things through, which I submit is a good part of what is really going on, for a government that cannot bring itself to write any legislation of its own is just laughable. Of all the governments, at least if we are to change things to make it "more efficient" around here, it should be for a government that is actually presenting a lot of legislation.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before moving on to questions and comments, 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 Nanaimo—Ladysmith, The Environment; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, National Defence; and the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the good fortune of being able to work on PROC before, and in different capacities in my days as an MLA I also dealt with rule changes and the importance of rules for the House.

The last time we attempted to change rules, it was very difficult to get real, tangible changes, because at the time there was the feeling that we should be looking at getting all parties onside. The government of the day did not really feel motivated to change any rules. It seemed to have a laissez-faire approach to rules and the need to reform. We believe it is one of the reasons that Canadians want to see a modernized Parliament.

Would the member not agree that looking at how we can modernize Parliament is something that is very laudable, and that at the very least we should get on with the discussion paper or have that talk at the committee level and allow those expert witnesses to come forward and share their thoughts? I have a number of thoughts that I would like to share with the House and I hope to do so relatively shortly.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would start by mentioning it is hardly a criticism that the previous government did not have a desire to change the rules and then did not get them changed. I do not even know if it is really the beginnings of a criticism.

I do know that the current government has committed to changing the rules of the House. Then the question becomes whether the Liberals are proceeding in a way that will actually achieve so-called "real change".

Routine Proceedings

If we look at their record, attempt number one was Motion No. 6. It was a colossal failure for the government, and rightly so. That motion never should have come to the floor of the House of Commons in the first place, and certainly there was no attempt at collaboration.

Then, instead of learning from that mistake as a government that in good faith wants to change the rules of the House to make it better, as many members on all sides of the House want to do, the Liberals took the same tack, which was to publish a paper.

They had some ideas; fine, share them around. The issue was that at PROC the Liberals said we should come out with recommendations from a government majority-led committee on a timeline that they decided. They were going to have their members ram that through at the committee. That was the problem. It was a problem of process.

I submit to the government that if it is serious about changing the rules of the House and not just throwing the House into disorder, it should get on with having an appropriate process and proceeding in an appropriate way. With the lack of good faith that is in place now because of the government's way of proceeding, the Liberals need to have all parties agree with any changes that they will make.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limouilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague gave a very good speech. I would first like to make a comment, and then I have a question for him.

Page 2 of the document tabled by the minister regarding the modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons talks about ways “to empower Members...to increase their influence in the legislative process.” What needs to be done is simple: just close the Prime Minister's Office, which was created by former Prime Minister Trudeau, and put an end to party discipline. That would be fantastic. It is not complicated. Those are the two things that prevent members from doing their work and representing their constituents properly.

We have heard about electronic voting. I came here to safeguard the honour of this institution, as much as possible and as much as I can as a private citizen. The idea that someone could vote while sitting at their desk and simply pushing a button seems completely dishonourable to me. Plus, if that were to be done from our constituency offices, I see all kinds of terrible scenarios potentially playing out. Imagine if a staffer were to vote instead of the member.

Does my colleague not find dishonourable this effort to ensure that one day members are no longer required to stand up before Canadians to vote?

•(1635)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I came here to stand up for the issues and measures that I consider important, and I am pleased to do so every day.

I also have a problem with the idea of electronic voting. If we were to do something like that, it should be done here in the House of Commons so that we would know which members are present. That way, other members would not be able to vote on behalf of

those who are not present in the House of Commons by pushing a button.

I do not support this electronic model, because it has numerous flaws.

[*English*]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to join in the debate. I would like to start by coming back to the focus of what is actually on the floor, which is a report from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It just happens that this report is on the family-friendly Parliament changes. My friend from Elmwood—Transcona made a great deal about the fact that the problem we have right now is not whether we agree with electronic voting, or Wednesdays with the Prime Minister, and Fridays off; our problem right now is on process.

We pride ourselves in being a sports nation. Most Canadians have had some kind of attachment to some kind of sports. We all know that the first thing to do is to decide on what the rules are going to be. When the committee did this report, the one that is actually in front of us right now, I cannot say—and when this motion came up, it was not on the agenda, and I did not have time to look at *Hansard* to see whether an express statement was made—that there would only be things included in this report—I was there, I was part of this—but only if we all agreed.

I can certainly say, if we look at *Hansard*, that this was the working assumption. The proof positive would be that the government was very much pushing its idea of Fridays off at that time. It was the Conservatives and New Democrats who made it crystal clear at the beginning, the middle, and at the end of our discussion on that subject that there was no way in heck that there was going to be unanimity. Liberals can make all the speeches they want. They can have the floor; we would not dream of denying them that. However, they should understand that as it is right now, neither opposition party is willing to accept that.

When one turns to this report, one would start looking through to see what happened to the Fridays. I know every member has read every page and word of this report, because we are voting on it. However, I would remind people, in case they have forgotten since they read it, there is no reference to Fridays because everything in the report was agreed upon by the entire committee.

My friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, said if there were only one agreement, how would we guarantee that there would be tangible results? This very report shows that we can do it. That speaks to how we run Parliament, which is why we all work under the implied understanding that if we did not all agree, it does not go in the report. That is exactly what happened, and the report is here now because it was approved with all-party agreement. There were things that members did not agree with that are not in the report. What is agreed to goes in the report and what is not agreed to does not go in the report.

Routine Proceedings

As we talk process, as I share some side comments with the former government House leader, what is really interesting is again harkening back to my friend from Elmwood—Transcona talking about process. I am not showing everyone some arcane documents, but the document that is actually the focus of what we are doing, and it is only here because we all agreed.

• (1640)

Not only that, but on the process of how this was approached, again, I was here. Do members know how this started? It started when the previous government House leader, the current government's previous House leader, wanted us to undertake this study. It sounds familiar, right? That is exactly what the current House leader asked us to do, except the previous House leader did not just drop a document out there in the public domain, in the middle of a constituency week, with really no comment and no consultation. It was just, "There you go."

The previous House leader, when the government wanted us to undertake a study, showed the respect the government said it was going to show more of to committees. He showed the respect of coming to the committee, presenting his thoughts, and making reference to his mandate, which I would like to underscore and which is on the front page of the report. The mandate letter the previous Liberal government House leader had stated:

Work with Opposition House Leaders to examine ways to make the House of Commons more family-friendly for Members of Parliament.

The first thing that veteran House leader did was come to the committee, have the respect to present what the government wanted us to do, and ask us to undertake it, which we then did, under the assumption that we would only put things in the report that we all agreed on, which we did. We had quite a number of significant changes that are going to make things better for the work-life balance of members of Parliament.

What is the problem? Why are we not doing the same thing? In this case, it was the official opposition formally asking the government, since it brought papers and we were not really sure what was going on, because we did not get the courtesy visit we got from the previous House leader, when we could ask questions. We just had this thing kind of dumped out there. The first thing that happened was, guess what? There was an amendment on the floor calling on the government to acknowledge that it will not make any changes unless there is all-party agreement.

Normally, what should have happened, if we followed the process we did with this, is that the government would have said, "Of course. What's the big deal?" We would have had a fast vote.

Now, as we are wasting all this time, we would have been discussing the very issues the government has asked us to undertake. Instead, look at the mess it has got us into.

I wish I had more time. I only have two minutes? That is what happens when we are having fun. I will do this as quickly as I can.

The government is the one that did not and would not adjourn that committee meeting, which pushed us into 24/7. Technically, in parliamentary la-la land, down the hall in one of the committee rooms it is still only a week ago last Tuesday. That is the bizarre situation we are in. The government amped that up, not the

opposition. The government decided that it was going to take it from a filibuster in committee to a filibuster that overtook the committee.

All we are asking is to recognize that we cannot have honest and free give-and-take negotiations, or discussions, that are actually equal and fair and are going to get somewhere as long as the government still maintains that it has the right to ram them through afterwards. We cannot have that kind of discussion. I have been at the negotiating table. It is like saying to a company when at the table, "No matter what you offer, we are going to strike." The government is basically saying, "We are going to negotiate with you, we are going to listen to you, we are going to be fair-minded, until you want to do something we do not agree with, and then we are going to utilize our majority and ram it through anyway."

That is why we are in this jam. It is the government's doing. The same government, a year ago, did it the right way, and we did not have any problem. There were no filibusters. There were no accusations of a power grab.

• (1645)

The very report that we are looking at here now is the result of the same process that we should be undertaking, and yet the government is still, to this moment, refusing to accept the fact that it does not have the moral right to change the rules of the House unilaterally, without the agreement of the other participants. That is not on.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily agree with all of the words that the member across the way has put on the record.

I do think it is important that we recognize that many members have a desire to modernize Parliament. What was asked of the procedure and House affairs committee was to take a look at and study a discussion paper that would help facilitate changing the Standing Orders, and in particular to look for experts in Canada and possibly outside of Canada. My question for the member is related to that.

Procedure and House affairs, as a standing committee, is afforded the opportunity to have individuals provide some opinions and some experiences. The member across the way has many years of experience, as I do. There are others who would like to participate in that discussion.

Would the NDP and the Conservatives recognize that what this is really about is an initiative by the government House leader to get people talking about the discussion paper, which will help assist us in changing the Standing Orders?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, again, the government is insistent that the opposition should just be reasonable and start talking. What it is failing to accept is that the process that it has followed has made that impossible. The proof of that is where we are right now.

The member asked, in good faith, if I would like to have that kind of a discussion. Yes. Quite frankly, I enjoy working together and trying to find the language when we come from different places. It is a lot more stimulating and fun than just attacking the government and going for a headline. We have been doing that for decades, and it gets old.

Routine Proceedings

What I really enjoy, though, is when all three sides come from different places and struggle to find language and an approach that we can agree on because it is for the betterment of all of us. That excites me. I enjoy that. I feel it is putting my experience to good use.

I am quite prepared to say yes to the member and commit our entire caucus to that process. Make it like we just did for the report in front of us, and we are more than willing to sit down. Maintain that the government has the right to unilaterally ram through what it wants if it does not like the way those negotiations happen, and it is not on.

• (1650)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend is just as good in 10 minutes as he is in 10 hours at getting a point across.

We are having a discussion about the process here. I think what the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is missing is that the process is important and that defining the process up front is important.

The government says that we should trust its good will, but we have seen on so many different files, whether it was with Motion No. 6 or the electoral reform issue, that the government wants to move unilaterally to do things that are to its advantage. We see it in the text of the discussion paper. All of the changes that are up for discussion are things that would be to the government's advantage.

It wants to move unilaterally if it can get away with it. What the opposition has said at PROC and elsewhere is that we cannot let them get away with moving unilaterally. This is precisely why we cannot assume good faith, since the government has shown bad faith in this process and in so many other cases. We need to have that assurance up front. If the government wants to work with the opposition to have this discussion, then it should pass the amendment and give us the assurance that we are actually going to work collaboratively. Once that is clearly defined in the motion, then we can move forward.

Would the member agree with that?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my friend for the outstanding job he has done at PROC. He is not a member but has subbed in. He pushed close to six hours of continuous filibustering. As someone who has done that sort of thing, it is not easy. He did an excellent job.

The hon. member is new to this place but he understands that when we work together, we can produce. He has pointed out that it is impossible for us to get to that point while the government remains in its stubborn power grab mode. I concur with him totally, and I again thank him for the work he has done.

I ask the government to stop reflecting only its talking points and to start listening. The process that we are in now is not the one the very same government used a year ago that gave us something positive. All we are asking for is the assurance that the process will be the same and that the only things that will be included in the next PROC report, like this one, are by all-party agreement. That is all that is being asked, yet somehow the government believes it is going to convince the media and the Canadian public that retaining the

right to ram something through and expecting the opposition to just merrily start having discussions is a responsible, respected approach, when it is in complete violation with the approach it used before, which we complimented. How much more do we have to spell this out?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Waterloo.

Some issues interest me more than others. Today I had the chance to talk about the budget, which is of great importance for all Canadians, but for me personally, I love the debate about the Standing Orders and the way in which the House and its standing committees function.

I do not say that lightly. I was first elected in 1988, and I had the privilege of serving the residents of Inkster back then. Sharon Carstairs was the leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba and she appointed me as party whip. That was back in 1988. Ever since then, I have always been a part of what one would classify as the House leadership team. I have been involved in discussions and negotiations on a wide spectrum of issues, in particular issues pertaining to the Standing Orders.

I have had the opportunity to sit down with Gary Filmon, a Progressive Conservative premier, and his designated individuals responsible to change Standing Orders. I have had the opportunity to sit down with Gary Doer, an NDP premier, and his designated individuals. I have even had the opportunity to speak to individuals inside this place with respect to the government under Stephen Harper, the former government House leader, and the designated individuals.

I like to think that I come to the table with a great deal of opposition experience especially. Most of my years in office have been on the opposition benches. I have spent over 20 years on the opposition benches.

I am very comfortable with this document, and I truly believe there are many members across the way who would be very comfortable with the document if we had this discussion.

I would also emphasize that at the end of the day, I believe, as this Prime Minister has clearly indicated, that there is a need for us to modernize the Canadian Parliament. I have been thinking that for years, and I am ever so grateful that we finally have a Prime Minister who wants to see that happen. We have a government House leader who has taken the initiative very seriously, and through her efforts has developed a discussion paper that is meant for the procedure and House affairs committee to sit down and have some dialogue on, and ensure that we can call some witnesses so we can hear from other parliamentary associations and from different levels of government.

Routine Proceedings

Provinces do a lot of wonderful things. I for one think that we made some positive changes in the Manitoba legislature. When we were looking at changing the rules, we looked at Ottawa and the types of things that Ottawa did that maybe we could incorporate. There is a great deal of interest, especially from certain people or stakeholders, as to how Parliament actually functions, and the roles that both opposition and government members have in making it work.

I am very much familiar with filibusters. I have participated in them in the past and there is always a chance that I might be participating in them in the future. I understand the need for the government get its legislation through, not only when I have been on the government benches. In fact, if members across the way will read *Hansard*, when the Conservative government House leader would stand up and bring in time allocation at that record pace, when I stood up during the question-and-answer session, I would defend the government's ability to use time allocation.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Not often.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: But the point is I did, Mr. Speaker, because I recognize there is an obligation of the government to look at ways in which it can get its legislative agenda through.

We already have different situations, whether it be on private members' bills, opposition days, the government's budget, or the throne speech, where there are limits that are put into place. I would like to see that discussion take place at PROC. I would like to hear what others have to say. There are other parliamentary jurisdictions that have demonstrated that it can be more efficient.

•(1655)

We had members talk about the benefits of electronic voting. There is an alternative to standing up on every vote. I have had literally hundreds and hundreds of votes over the last number of years here. One stand-up vote takes roughly eight to 10 minutes, depending on who is calling it. Is that the best use of time, the hundreds of hours that we spend on standing in our place to vote, when in fact we could potentially push a button inside the chamber? I understand that there is even wiring that would allow that. If we want to see more debate on legislation, under the rules being proposed through the discussion paper, there is the potential to have even more debate on legislation. As opposed to focusing strictly on the negatives, I would suggest that members would be well served to get a better appreciation of what is in the discussion paper.

As I indicated, I have sat down with different levels of government, negotiating changes to the Standing Orders. Not once in those negotiations did I ever say I would not participate unless I have a guarantee that it passes by unanimous consent. There is no way they would have agreed to that. At least, I do not believe they would have agreed to it. I never used that as a strategy. I was open to the government and whoever was driving the need for change. I argue that it is because the former government did not make it a high priority and this government has made it a priority. There are members on all sides of the House who love to debate and talk about the rules and who want to look at ways that we can improve the system.

They talk about the prime minister's hour. Not one Liberal member of Parliament has suggested that the prime minister only be here once a day. That is not the intent. I like the idea of having a prime minister's hour. Not all members of this place can be a leader of a political party on the other side of the bench, or have the privilege of having the first series of questions, let us say, the first nine questions. Typically and historically, the prime minister answers the first nine, 10, 15 questions. After that, that is it. What about those members who are asking the 25th question? I like the idea of members knowing that on such and such a day, if they stand up, even if they are question number 20 or 25, they are going to get the opportunity to have the prime minister answer their question. I see that as a positive thing. That is not a negative. No one on this side is advocating that the prime minister should work only one day a week inside the House of Commons. That is not what is happening here.

I want to refer to the Fridays, because I want to emphasize, and I have said it before, as the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North, I genuinely believe that I work seven days a week. Some days are more hours than other days, but I go to events on Sundays, and do all sorts of things every day of the week. I would challenge members to think about how we could better serve our constituency by looking at the way we do our work here in Ottawa.

There are opportunities that would enable us to provide a better service to our constituents. The Friday is an excellent example. Today, it is a half day. If we were to shift those hours to a Tuesday and a Thursday, then we could be in our ridings on the Friday. I have missed many events in my riding on Fridays because I have to be here. It is such a privilege to be here. However, if it means that we could have a more productive day on a Tuesday and a Thursday and not have to work the half day here in Ottawa, if I could be in my constituency office meeting with people or going to an event, I would think my constituents would rather that I am there and servicing them. It does not mean that there would be fewer sitting hours in the House of Commons. Anyone who tries to give that impression is wrong.

Most importantly, when we talk about these changes, what we should be talking about is exactly what the government House leader has afforded the Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs to do.

•(1700)

The government House leader did a phenomenal job in putting the discussion paper together. She has put it before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and is asking the committee to call in some witnesses. Let us hear what some of those witnesses have to say. A good, quality debate could be had. If the opposition sees merit in that, which I truly hope it will, we should take advantage of the opportunity and get engaged in making this a more modern Parliament.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody is going to believe that my friend from Winnipeg North is selflessly trying to improve the Standing Orders for the good of all when the discussion paper put forward clearly contains exclusive provisions that work to the interests of the government and when Liberals refuse to accept an amendment that would require unanimous agreement.

Routine Proceedings

We could have these discussions in a framework in which we agree, but the member should understand, with respect to Fridays, for example, that by reducing the number of days of sitting, the government would reduce those opportunities to hold it accountable. Even if we added the extra minutes or hours to days Monday through Thursday, the fact is that we would be reducing important opportunities on specific days for members of Parliament to challenge the government about the issues of the day. This is just one example of many examples in the discussion paper, which the Liberals know, which we know, and which we know they know work to the advantage of the government.

Liberals saying that they are going to selflessly do it all themselves for the interests of others argument clearly does not hold water for anyone who is watching this debate. Why does the government not agree to work with all parties, to have that discussion in a way that actually includes all voices. Then we can talk about things that would actually improve the Standing Orders, but still remain fair and facilitate honest and genuine discourse back and forth?

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would welcome a back-and-forth question and answer in which there would be specific examples. I truly believe there is no government wins and opposition loses in the discussion paper. The member just referenced taking away Fridays. Let me use the example of question period. There would be one less day of question period. That time could be allocated to question period on other days, which would mean there would be more opportunity for the backbenchers to ask questions. On one special day of the week, the Prime Minister would answer all questions. He would also be here on other days, but it would provide the backbenchers, the ones who do not get up as often as they could because of the demands of the day, the opportunity to ask questions. That is more accountability.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for anybody watching, we have to separate the sincerity from the disingenuousness here.

The member for Winnipeg North said that having one day a week for the Prime Minister would subject the Prime Minister to questioning for the entire 45 minutes and that would be great, but there is nothing to stop the Prime Minister from answering every question in question period now. The Prime Minister could stand every day in the House and answer all the questions five days a week if the Liberals were really interested in accountability.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North said that the Liberals wanted to make this place run more efficiently and legislation needed to be passed. The government has the tool of time allocation now, but it wants to build into the rules an automatic way to limit opposition input in legislation without the Liberals wearing it, without the government having to publicly and transparently show Canadians that it is bringing in time allocation. Make no mistake, this is not about transparency, goodwill, and making this place work better. It is about the government trying to use the rules to seize the advantage.

My question for the hon. member is this. If he has such powerful arguments for why these are such common sense, modernizing

innovations, why does he not trust that all members of the House could agree on that before moving forward?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member's assessment. I would encourage the member to go through the discussion paper.

He said that the Prime Minister could answer all the questions he wanted today. If we based it on that, there would be all sorts of rule changes that are currently in place. The rules allow for members of Parliament to get a better sense of what is going to be happening. For example, on a Wednesday or Tuesday, members know that in the first 35 or 40 questions, or whatever the number is, they will be able to put their questions directly to the Prime Minister. That is a significant gain. We should have that discussion and at the end of the day, we will have a more modern Parliament. The reason the government House leader brought this forward was for us to get into that discussion.

The Deputy Speaker: I will let the House know that earlier in the day there were not as many people rising for questions and comments. That has changed a bit now. With the greater interest in questions and comments, we will try to limit interventions a little more than we did earlier in the day. It will be no more than one minute, both for the person posing the question or comment and for the member responding.

Resuming debate, the hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion before the House to concur in the 11th report of the procedure and House affairs committee and our government's desire to modernize the House of Commons. We have put forward some ideas on how to improve this place to make it more accountable, more effective, and more transparent. I would like to make one thing clear. We want to hear from all parties and all MPs. We welcome a discussion on this matter. It would be good for this place and it would build on the work done on the 11th report.

In direct response to the Harper government's approach to this place, in the last campaign we spoke to Canadians about giving them more of a voice in Ottawa. Our goal is to make it a better place for members of Parliament to do their jobs and represent their constituents.

The discussion paper touches on three broad themes: What is the best way to manage time in the House of Commons? What is the best way to manage debate of legislation and motions? What is the best way to manage the work of committees?

Let me discuss some of the ideas in the discussion paper.

First is question period. We promised in the last election to reform question period so that all members, including the Prime Minister, are held to greater account. We said we would introduce a prime minister's question period to improve that level of direct accountability.

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The discussion paper suggests that the British model of the prime minister's question period is one possible way of implementing this change to complement our current practices. We would like to look at a made-in-Canada approach. People have been saying for years they would like to improve question period, but again, let me make it clear: Liberal members will not be recommending that the Prime Minister only appear in question period once per week. The prime minister's question period would be in addition to the current practice of appearing on other days of the week. We are committed to more accountability in question period, not less.

Another idea that has drawn attention is Friday sittings. The House of Commons sits for fewer hours than normal on that day, four and a half hours. There are no votes in the House of Commons that day on the content of a bill, and committees do not sit on that day.

One idea worth exploring is reallocating the hours and questions on Friday to the other sitting days. The change would give MPs a chance to spend time in their communities on that weekday, meeting with their constituents and addressing their needs directly. Alternatively, we could perhaps make Friday a full day so that we could have committee time, and so forth. Regardless, for MPs Friday would continue to be a workday. The difference is that their focus on that day could be working in their ridings, being accountable to their constituents. It could become a constituency day.

Reallocating Friday sittings would not mean any less time in Parliament for MPs. The four and a half hours from that day could be redistributed to the other four days of the week. There would be more time for debate on those other days, and time could be added to the daily question period from Monday through Thursday as well. This could be easily accomplished, for instance, by having the House open at 9 a.m. instead of 10 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Most Canadians start their workday at 9 a.m. or earlier; why should the House not start at 9 a.m. as well?

Another idea is whether we should consider electronic voting for members of Parliament. MPs spend a lot of time voting in the House of Commons, standing when their name is called. The discussion paper suggests members consider a more efficient method, electronic voting. With this method of voting, MPs could have more time to get work done outside the chamber. The result of the vote would presumably be instant, and Canadians would have an immediate record of how their MP voted.

This suggestion is not new. A parliamentary committee recommended electronic voting in a 1985 report on House of Commons reform. That was 32 years ago, before the Internet changed our lives.

We live in an information age. Let us adapt and bring this institution into the 21st century. Let us think about truly modernizing how we spend our time here and take a good look at electronic voting as an option. With the moving of the chamber to the West Block, why not explore a pilot project and give it a try?

The discussion paper says that MPs could consider changing the calendar of their sittings so that the House sits earlier in January, and/or later in June, and/or earlier in September. The paper suggests that more flexibility is needed in how often the House sits, so that if an urgent matter is before the Commons, MPs could spend more time

debating it, potentially by sitting longer on a given day or beyond the planned adjournment.

● (1710)

It is important that MPs from all sides of the House have a meaningful role in the legislative process. There are different ways to accomplish that goal. One suggestion in the discussion paper is to add more time for private members' business each week. That means more opportunity for the House of Commons to debate private members' bills and motions that MPs put forward.

These are both ideas we think MPs on both sides of the aisle would want to explore further. I encourage us to do so.

Our government has pledged not to improperly prorogue Parliament to avoid difficult political circumstances, something that was done in the past. The previous government prorogued Parliament to avoid a confidence vote. To guard against the improper use of prorogation, one idea would be to require the government to table a document early in the following session that explains why Parliament was prorogued. The report would automatically be studied by a House of Commons committee. That is a suggestion which makes sense and I believe we should look at it.

I believe we have an opportunity to have a meaningful debate, recognizing that every member, every party has a role to play.

These are just some of the ideas in the discussion paper. We are genuinely hoping for a review of these ideas by our parliamentary colleagues. I am encouraging all members to start that discussion.

● (1715)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today the government House leader said that she had had meaningful discussion with her counterparts. As one of her counterparts in the House of Commons, I believe that a meaningful discussion is when one party says something and then follows through and actually does that. To this point, we have not had those meaningful discussions.

We want to approach any further discussions with the government House leader in good faith, with the expectation that the government will fix the mess that it has created. It can fix it by publicly committing that any changes to the Standing Orders will only occur if there is full agreement in this House. Until that commitment is made, any future discussions will be in vain and we as opposition will continue to use every tool that we have in order to ensure that the government does not remove our rights to hold it to account.

I want to give the government House leader another opportunity. We have asked it time and time again. It is a very simple solution, and if she can answer this, we could then go on and start to discuss all of the various ideas, how we could possibly look at them, which ones we could agree on, and which could be pilot projects. There is a host of ideas to talk about.

Routine Proceedings

Will she agree, like precedent has set, that the government will not move ahead unless it has agreement from the opposition parties?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I have been clear from the beginning that I want to work with all members of Parliament and I want to work with all parties.

Today's conversation has shown many times that the government's approach to working better, more collaboratively with other MPs and other parties has resulted in some members stating that we have not advanced enough legislation. That is the price we pay when we work collaboratively. We will continue to do so.

In the campaign we committed to making changes to this place in direct response to the previous government's approach of using time allocation more than was needed and of not wanting to work with other parties. That is an approach we are not going to take. We will continue to work with all members and all parties in this House.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader why she moved away from the approach of her predecessor who, as I mentioned in my remarks earlier, on January 28 of last year came into the committee, mentioned that his mandate was to work with House leaders to make the House of Commons more family friendly, and asked us to entertain that debate and discussion, which we did, with the understanding that the only things that would be in the report would be items that we agreed on. That led to this multiple-page report being here, and that we are all in support of.

Why did the government House leader abandon what was a proven, positive way to bring us all together, and instead head down this road that has led us to this ridiculous place?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, we were all elected to this place to have meaningful discussions, to have tough conversations. The discussion paper that I released actually builds off of the report that the member referred to. I believe there are more conversations to have.

In the campaign, we made commitments to Canadians that we would modernize this place. In the discussion paper, I have suggested other ideas. That is not the be-all and end-all, by any means. I have made suggestions from multiple areas to allow us to have that conversation, to encourage us to have that conversation.

I know the member has been in this place for a long time. His experience and knowledge are more than welcome. I look forward to having meaningful conversation. I believe that we can have meaningfully productive conversation, and that is not what is taking place right now.

• (1720)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. government House leader will know that I have put forward my ideas in response to her ideas. I look forward to the chance to work on them.

The difficulty here, which is an obvious obstacle, and I do not think all of the fault lies on one side of the House or the other, is that we need a process that ensures that all parties are comfortable with and support any changes to our House rules. Otherwise, the changes that are made now could be sweeping, and could always benefit a government party. What goes around comes around. I urge the

government House leader to reconsider and ensure that changes are arrived at through a process that includes all parties in this place.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for actually sharing her response to the discussion paper. It allowed me to see her perspectives on different ideas. To see someone in this place debating and discussing those ideas, to share a different perspective, is exactly the kind of perspective that I believe is needed for this debate to take place.

It is important that we modernize this place to bring it into the 21st century. It is important that we do that to ensure that more people consider elected office. Therefore, I appreciate the work that the member has provided me. I have just received that report today, and I can assure this House that I will be reading it.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say it is a pleasure to rise to be part of this debate today, but obviously, given the heavy-handed attempts of the government to try to ram through changes that would make it less accountable, I cannot say it is a pleasure. It is something I have to do, something we all have to do, to try to stand up for the rights of Canadians to make sure the government is held accountable. I am proud to do that, but I certainly wish I did not have to be doing it, because the government should not be taking this heavy-handed approach in trying to ram through the types of changes it is trying to ram through.

The government would obviously eliminate some of the accountability that is built into the measures put in place in the House by ensuring the prime minister only has to be, essentially, held accountable by Canadians for 25 hours in the entire year, by making sure there are less days members have to be here in the House of Commons to be held accountable, and by taking away some of the ability of the opposition parties to draw the attention of Canadians to important issues so the government can be held accountable by Canadians.

That is really why I am standing up today. I am doing everything I can and I know my colleagues across the opposition benches are as well. This is one of those rare moments when we see all the opposition parties standing united. That means something, because we are standing up for democracy. We are standing up for Canadians and their right to hold the government accountable through their members of Parliament whom they have elected. That is something too fundamental for us not to stand up and fight for all the way.

I listened to the government House leader give a speech that tried to deflect away from a lot of these things.

Before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I will mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I cannot forget to let you know that.

Routine Proceedings

The government House leader talked and used a lot of time to try to deflect away from the real issues here. She tried to claim that somehow this was going to make things more accountable, that somehow they really wanted to have this discussion, which no one seems to have heard is actually happening. The Liberals have had all kinds of time to have a discussion, but there does not seem to be one. They only want to have a discussion when they can be sure they are going to get their way. If they cannot have their way, they do not want to even start the discussion.

That is where we are. The opposition parties are saying these kinds of changes have always been done with the unanimous consent of the parties. That is to ensure that changes are not being made to simply benefit the party in power, which is what the government is very clearly trying to do. I think the Liberals are hoping and expecting that maybe Canadians will not pay attention to this. Maybe they think Canadians will not be smart enough to realize what they are trying to do. However, Canadians are not stupid, and they will not stand for this kind of garbage that we are seeing from the government. They will not stand for this kind of heavy-handed approach. They will not stand for a government that is trying everything it can to be held less accountable. They will not stand for a prime minister who refuses to answer questions of Canadians in the House of Commons.

As proof of that, I would like to just spend a little time reading some emails. Being a member of the committee that is looking at these changes, I have received hundreds, into the thousands, of emails over the last 10 days or so. I know Liberal members of the committee have been sent these as well, because I can see they are copied on a lot of these. In fact, it is usually me being copied on some of the ones being sent to them.

I hope this is something government members are listening to. I see the government members are having a conversation over there. Maybe they can have a conversation among themselves. It would be time they had a conversation with the opposition parties about actually getting down to work in trying to ensure that the changes being made are not being made by them and them alone to benefit them and them alone. It is time they actually benefit Canadians. They need to learn that. They need to listen, because this is Canadians speaking, and I am going to share their words with those Liberals right now and hope they will actually do some listening.

I will start out with some of the comments I have received here.

The first is from someone named Marilyn Raible. She says, "As a Canadian citizen and a taxpayer, it is with total disgust to hear the Liberal Party once again is trying to sneak something past the people of Canada that once again would only benefit the Liberals. All of those elected and now sitting in Parliament must be accountable to the Canadian people and the democratic principles. You were put in these positions to work for and represent the Canadian people and Canada as a whole."

● (1725)

She goes on to say, "As a democracy, we have the right to have elected officials sit in Parliament from Monday to Friday and debate and scrutinize bills for the good of the people. The Liberal Party has no right in shutting down Parliament on Fridays and permanently limiting debate or scrutiny on their bills. Men went to war to fight for

these freedoms that we experience in this great country of Canada. This is what democracy is all about, the freedom to speak up and debate and to work for the good of the Canadian people. I say no to shutting down Parliament on Fridays and no to limiting debate on bills."

I have one from Hugh Freeman, who says, "This is in respect to the committee that you are currently participating in concerning the debating of the rules of the House of Commons. Be advised that I disagree with the formation of, the terms of reference of, and the timing of this to put it in conflict with the coincidental budget hearing, with the apparent purpose of trying to hide your committee from the Canadian public. I also disagree with the PM trying to shirk his own responsibility by trying to no longer attend Friday House sittings and have advised him separately of that." The Prime Minister is hearing about this, too. He continues, "Although it seems clear that the intent was to hide this committee hearing behind budget matters, be assured the public has indeed noticed your nefarious behaviour and will endeavour to ensure you pay a price for this at the polls."

I have read a couple of emails so members can get a sense of the pattern here, and I will read some others as well, but I think what we are hearing is Canadians saying, "We won't be fooled. We are not stupid. We see what this government is trying to do. We see they're trying to benefit themselves and themselves alone. We see that they're trying to make sure they're not held accountable. We see they're trying to avoid question period so that opposition members, on behalf of Canadians, can ensure they're held accountable."

People are using words like "nefarious". I can read a number of comments in here that refer to the Prime Minister as a dictator. Those are the kinds of comments Canadians are making, because they are so upset about what is being done here. They see it as akin to those kind of things. When people are seeing it and speaking about it in such strong terms, that means something. That means Canadians are seeing what is going on here. They understand what the government is trying to do and they are upset and they will not tolerate it. They are making threats even to the point of saying that the Liberals will pay the price for this at the polls.

Liberal backbenchers will see no benefit from this, because the Prime Minister is the one who is going to benefit in that he will not have to be held accountable. I hope some of those backbenchers are saying, "You know what, Mr. Prime Minister? My constituents won't stand for this and I can tell you I'm going to pay a price for this at the polls. I don't think it's acceptable and it's also not right." I hope they speak up, maybe when they go to their caucus meeting on Wednesday, and let the Prime Minister know that this is completely and utterly unacceptable and it will not be tolerated by the Canadian people. Maybe some of them will have the guts to tell the Prime Minister that.

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I will continue with some other emails. There are so many of them it is hard to choose which ones to read. I will read this one from Corey Smith. It is addressed to the Liberal members of the committee, and says, "Please stop the proposed changes to Parliament. I encourage you to keep the ability for debate and accountability available to both members of your own party and the opposition. I encourage you to encourage the Prime Minister to show up to work and be accountable more than one day a week. I understand the need to get home to your ridings, but working a half day on Fridays is not too much to expect. I personally work five to six days per week. I understand that you work long hours. I worked road construction. Often we worked until dark Mondays to Thursdays and we would finish early on Fridays to allow for travel, but not before noon. Is this a case where the Prime Minister is not capable of answering questions due to lack of experience and this is a good way for him to avoid this? Would you have allowed this from Mr. Harper? If things are getting to be too much for Prime Minister Trudeau, Parliament can be prorogued. This has happened. However, debate and accountability should never permanently be removed through limitations of this nature. Show how much you love Canada and stop this. You may be in the opposition in the future wishing you had the ability to debate and hold people accountable. It would be a shame if it is lost."

There are hundreds more emails like these where people are telling the Liberal government that they will not stand for this, that they will not tolerate this, and it is time that the Prime Minister understood that he cannot just do whatever he wants. He has to be accountable to this House of Commons and accountable to the Canadian people. I can say that as the opposition, we will ensure that he does exactly that.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, and for the general information of all members, even when another member of Parliament or a minister is included when a member is citing a text from some other source, we still urge hon. members to switch up that name either to the name of the riding or the title, in this case, even if it is something the member is citing for the record in the House.

Questions and comments, the hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that we want many Canadians to pay attention to the important work that is done in this place, but it is not always the case. However, in the last campaign, I recall knocking on doors, and two words came up time and time again. Those two words were "time allocation". That is something the previous government used time and time again to limit and restrict debate. It was a tool that was used many a time.

I recognize that it is an available tool, and if the member is so inclined to want meaningful debate, to want more meaningful debate, could the member please explain why the previous government used time allocation, in historic amounts, to limit and restrict debate when his party was on the government side of the House?

Mr. Blake Richards: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I did not realize I had done what you referred to. In all the other cases, I was trying to insert titles, but my apologies.

I listened to the so-called question from the government House leader, and I was saddened to listen to the deflection tactic being used. One of the changes the Liberals are trying to make is to basically be able to proactively time allocate on things and be able to say that they will dispense with the whole idea of pretending they will allow debate. They will just tell us right off the bat that they will not allow any debate. That is one of the changes they are proposing.

They are also proposing eliminating, basically, any ability for the opposition to debate things in committees. Essentially, that is what they are trying to do. They are trying to ensure that the Prime Minister only has to be here one day a week to be held accountable by Canadians. They are trying to have one less day a week of question period, where they have to be held accountable to Canadians.

I hear these deflection tactics. At the end of the day, this is really all about ensuring that they do not have to be held accountable to Canadians. That is what they want to do. Canadians are not stupid. They understand what the Liberals are trying to do, and they will not accept it. They will not tolerate it, so they might as well give up the ghost right now and start being held accountable, as they should be.

• (1735)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the more I listen to this debate, the more I realize that the government's proposals are a solution in search of a problem.

I do not know what is not working well here. We have committees that are well functioning. We have a House of Commons that is working well. The tools are all there.

We all know that the government has a majority, and when it really wants to, it can use that majority to win the vote at the end of the day. The only real currency the opposition has, on the other hand, is time. It is up to both sides to use those powers in a responsible manner. If the opposition is wasting time, the government has the tool of time allocation. If the government, on the other hand, is using its time allocation too much, we, as the opposition, can use certain techniques to slow it down but not stop it entirely.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what problem he thinks is being addressed by the government's action. What does he think the government's motivation really is?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I think the problem the Liberals are trying to solve is that they have a Prime Minister who does not want to be held accountable. He probably cannot really answer the questions. If I read through these emails, it is very clear, in the theme of these things, that everyone in Canada sees that the Prime Minister is not capable of answering questions, and he does not want to have to do that. He does not want to be held accountable.

The member is correct that the way things function here now works really well. When we have a majority government, at the end of the day, the Liberals will almost certainly always be able to put through whatever legislation they seek to put through, but the tool the opposition has at its disposal is to make sure Canadians are aware of what is occurring.

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Often what a government can try to do, much like what the government is trying to do in this case right now, is push something through, ram it through, so quickly that Canadians do not have a chance to become aware of it. The opposition members have these tools at their disposal to create debate about something to make sure that Canadians are aware of it. They can then make a judgment about whether they think this is something appropriate for the government to do. The government is trying to remove and eliminate those tools so Canadians will never have put in the light of day what it is trying to do. Therefore, it will avoid being held accountable, and that is not acceptable.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate in this chamber. I started to make some points on this issue at committee, but I just did not have enough time there to get to a lot of the things that I wanted to say. Therefore, I appreciate the opportunity to continue that dialogue here in the chamber.

It is interesting how much this issue has galvanized the interest of Canadians. Even before I started participating in the work of the committee, I was receiving correspondence on all kinds of different channels from Canadians who are interested in this issue. Who would have thought that Canadians would be so seized with the activities of the procedure and House affairs committee here in Ottawa? Canadians take the strength of our institutions very seriously. They take the integrity of those institutions seriously. They take the process by which we see developments and changes to those institutions very seriously, because there is something very insidious being talked about and being intended by the government.

The Liberals use nice-sounding weasel words like “modernization” and “having a conversation”, but it is actually very clear what they mean in every case. On this side of the House, we are very willing to have a conversation in a collaborative way about how the Standing Orders might be changed collaboratively going forward. No set group of Standing Orders is perfect and I am sure we can always learn from the experience and look for opportunities to improve them. However, there is a difference between that collective process of evolution that we can undertake together where we work on possible improvements and what is being proposed by the government, which is nothing short of a Standing Orders revolution, where the Liberals come in independently as the government and decide what they would like the Standing Orders to say. It is their concept of what constitutes modernization and they are going to impose that on the House.

Government members plead, “No, this is not our intent. We are not going to necessarily do it unilaterally. We just want to leave open the possibility to do it unilaterally.” As long as the government members leave that possibility open, surely members of the opposition cannot trust their good faith. Why do the Liberals not just take that option off the table, the option of unilateral action, of revolutionary changes to the Standing Orders, and instead say they are going to do this in an evolutionary way where members put forward different ideas but ultimately have to agree on the next steps we take forward? That would be a productive way of gradually improving our institution.

We hear members of the government say, “Let us just get on to the discussion on the substance. We want to have a discussion about

these issues.” It is interesting that this actually parallels the conversation we had during the electoral reform debate. Members of the government said not to worry about the issue of a referendum but to just get on to talking about electoral systems, because, in fact, what they wanted was to push their preferred system. What I think the Liberals realized as that process went through was that Canadians were paying attention to what the Liberals were trying to do, that Canadians cared about the process by which these decisions were made, and they wanted to know that there was going to be a fair process established up front before proceeding to have the discussion. It is great to have the discussion, but they have to define a fair process up front.

What we saw with the electoral reform discussion was that in response to that public pressure, eventually the government realized that it was not going to be able to get away with it unilaterally, so it dropped it and decided it was not going to do anything. That is probably where we are going to end up eventually with respect to the Standing Orders, but it is unfortunate that the government members have yet to learn this lesson. They still want to make a unilateral change that reflects their concept of what the Standing Orders should be rather than work with the House in a constructive way to evolve those going forward.

Frankly, I am very interested in having a conversation about possible changes to the Standing Orders. We had a take-note debate in the House of Commons about those issues. I put forward some specific ideas about changes that could be made to the Standing Orders. Those might be changes that are shared by some members of the government. They might be changes that some members within my own party do not agree on. That was an opportunity to put forward ideas, to have that conversation, and to move that forward in a constructive way.

The framework that we thought we could work under was one in which the procedure and House affairs committee would study these prospective changes, work on them, and look for ways of moving them forward. It would be a more genuine, gradual process of moving forward, not a kind of unilateral process of the government House leader or the Prime Minister or some staffer in the PMO deciding, “No, this is what we want to do.”

• (1740)

The Liberals plead with us to accept their good faith, but when we look at what is in the discussion paper, these are all things that work to the advantage of the government.

It is interesting going through the discussion paper. I read it and spoke about it in detail at committee on what the government House leader was putting forward. The government always uses its human shield, the young family, the family friendliness of it. That is always the Liberals go-to for trying to make changes to the House of Commons that works to their political advantage.

Routine Proceedings

I take exception to this as a member of Parliament with a young family, always very seized with these questions of how we balance the needs of our families with the needs of the work we do. Let us remember, as other members have pointed out, this is not unique to members of Parliament. All Canadians deal with this in different forms. Many people in my constituency have to travel for work as well, whether they work in the energy sector or perhaps the military. This is not just unique to members of Parliament.

I put forward some ideas of things that we could actually do that would not be about the political interests of the government but would actually help young families. The Liberals talk about having fewer days but more extended hours. However, extended hours is a real problem for people with young families. If we are sitting for very long days four days a week, that makes it much more difficult for members to have time to talk on the phone or to meet in person with members of their family. That creates some new additional challenges for families.

The elimination of Friday sittings is really about taking away a day on which the government would have to be accountable. Even if we add those extra minutes to question period at other times of the day, we know, and the Liberals know, that if Friday sittings are taken away that is one less day on which the government has to stand and answer questions which could appear on that day's news. There are only four days instead of five days on which we get to ask the government questions, which then can appear as part of the broader discourse.

The Liberals are using young families as their human shield for this change they want to make, which is in their interests, when we could have a real constructive discussion about ways to move forward. One of the suggestions I put forward was reducing the number of days on which votes could take place, continuing to have the same number of days for discussion, debate, and questions, but maybe having one additional day on which votes did not take place. That would provide an additional level of flexibility but would in no way slow down the existing legislative process.

If we work together in a constructive, collaborative way in which we establish ground rules from the start, we could have some of these ideas given a full airing. These are things that I mentioned when we debated the Standing Orders earlier.

Let us talk about some of the so-called reforms to question period that the Liberals want to make. I think Canadians are interested in discussions about potential changes to question period, but one of the suggestions put forward is that we make better use of late shows in particular as a vehicle for more substantive exchanges. Perhaps we could require that ministers make themselves available to be scheduled for a late show exchange rather than parliamentary secretaries. That is an opportunity where the minister responsible for a given file has to answer, in long form, specific questions that members of Parliament have. This idea would enhance accountability.

What the government has proposed in its reforms are not some of the changes that were put forward in a private member's bill by my friend from Wellington—Halton Hills on question period reform, which would have involved an expectation that ministers actually answer the questions. That is not in the discussion paper. We see the

government only putting forward changes that work to its interests. It is obvious what the Liberals are doing.

Another example is what the Liberals are doing on time allocation. Their proposal entails time allocation effectively being automatic, that on every bill, the Liberals would be allocating the time. This is different. They would not only be allocating the time in the House, but they would also be allocating the amount of time at committees. Therefore, committees would no longer be the masters of their own domain and would not have the flexibility. This is really concerning.

What if in the context of the study of a bill a committee doing its job suddenly realizes there is a significant issue that it was not aware of before and it needs to dig deeper into that to ensure it understands what is going on, so it needs more time. The government wants to completely take away that flexibility. It would be really good for the government, but it would not be good for this institution, it would not be good for the important role that the opposition has, and it would not be good for Canadians. We need to have the proper amount of time to debate legislation.

Let us agree to support a unanimous decision-making process where we can make changes collaboratively that are in the interests of Canadians and the institution. Let us do it that way, not in a unilateral way that the government wants. Let us agree to do it in that way and then we can start moving forward.

• (1745)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hear the NDP and the Conservatives talk about the need to only change the Standing Orders through unanimity. This has not always happened in the past. It has not happened in the case of the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston. He is a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. In a previous Parliament, he used a private member's motion to force a vote in the House of Commons to amend the Standing Orders with respect to how we elect our Speaker. Was there consensus? No, there was no consensus. Actually, over 42% of the members voted against that motion. Is this the threshold for consensus?

Let us also look to the NDP. The member for Burnaby South used his time allocation business motion in private members' business to change the Standing Orders to implement an e-petition scheme. Was there consensus to that change? No. Actually, over 49% of the members in this House voted against that proposal. How can this member, knowing that members of this House have passed changes to our current and past Standing Orders without unanimity, square this with a demand for unanimity this time around?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my friend is very clearly comparing apples to oranges here. A proposal to change the process by which a Speaker is elected is a relatively minor change in the scheme of things. It was discussed and debated on, and there was a great diversity of opinions within individual parties. At the time, there were differences of opinion in every party. It would be very different from a majority government unilaterally trying to impose substantial changes to the legislative process without any kind of opposition buy-in.

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I think there is a clear difference, especially in terms of the scale of the kind of changes we are talking about. From now on, automatically every piece of legislation would have the government dictating the amount of time that was spent discussing that, not only in the House but also in committee. That would be a revolutionary change, and it would completely undermine the role of the opposition.

I think the change with respect to the Speaker election was whether we have successive rounds of balloting or an instant run-off vote. With all due respect, whether we have an instant run-off or multiple rounds of balloting is a minor change compared to whether the government dictates how much time a committee can spend discussing legislation.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

This is absolutely pathetic. Insufferable in the righteous belief that it is the natural governing party, the government would have us believe it can force us to accept something by giving us the impression that it is our choice. The Liberals must think we are children.

The two people who just spoke are new MPs. I happen know this gentleman has children. I would like to ask my colleague a question.

Does he see why we would feel like children who are being given the choice of going to Boston Pizza or Tim Hortons by someone who already knows we are going to Boston Pizza even though we would rather go for a doughnut at Tim Hortons?

They say that we can make choices and that they want to hear from us, but in truth, the Liberals know they are the ones calling the shots. They put it in their bill, and they are going to force things on us, but it cannot actually look like that is what is happening because they are so smooth.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, as the parent of young children, I will say that my daughter insists on unanimity in the decisions we make in our house as well.

Certainly I think the member's point is quite an important one. Every member of Parliament here is elected by their constituents and obviously has a slightly different role, whether they are in government or opposition, but is an equal member of this House. They need to be actively involved in the decision-making, on an equal footing, when we talk about things that are fundamental to our institution. Within this place, there are tiers of members. All members need to be engaged in this discussion. It would be very concerning if the government were able to go ahead with its plan unilaterally imposed on the opposition. It could talk about discussion all it wants, but when the decisions are clearly made in advance and point in the direction of working to the government's advantage, that is obvious to Canadians. We are seeing in terms of the outcry from Canadians that they do not believe that the government is not personally interested in the outcome. Clearly, it is, and we need to move in a way that is collaborative.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I would like to table the government's answers to Questions Nos. 580, 763, and 841 to 876.

[*English*]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton North.

I came to this place to serve. I have had two previous occupations. I served as a lawyer for six years, and following that, I had the privilege of serving as a chaplain to a community for 20 years. I love the idea of serving. I felt that there were greater challenges ahead of me, and I wanted to use my gifts to the best of my ability. That is really what brought me to this place.

I know it sounds idealistic, but that is exactly why I stand in this place today. It is really to serve. I do not say that to brag. I know there are many members in this House who have come to this place for the same reason. Those members and I share the belief that we do not need any credit because we get our fulfillment in seeing the difference that we can make for Canadians.

I have to admit that there are parts of this job that take me out of my comfort zone. When I first came to this House and stood up in the House to speak, it was not something that I would say I was immediately comfortable with, but the greater interest for me is serving the people who put me here, and so, I have become accustomed to it, and I stand up when I know that I am standing up for the right thing.

I need to stand up today as a member of the procedure and House affairs committee. I am happy that I have this opportunity. I am honoured to have this opportunity, because I want Canadians to know about what the government is putting forward.

There is no question that everyone in this House works hard. Although I have been involved in politics all my life working in the background, I have never truly known and appreciated how hard members work. However, the topic today is not about working harder. It is not about that at all. We all work hard. It is about how to work better. The analogy I think of is a mouse on a treadmill, working hard, running on that treadmill, going all day long, not really going anywhere but working hard at it. That is not what we want.

We want our efforts to be used so that we can serve Canadians to the best of our ability. That is what we are trying to do with the motion. What we are trying to do is get a discussion going about how we can better serve Canadians. Let us be more efficient. Let us do it better. I think we all share that. However, we have to get to the discussion before we can embark on the ideas of how to get there.

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Let me give an example of committee work. This was new to me. What happens in the House currently is we are called to committees. We go to those committees where very important work is done. It is probably the most important work. Witnesses come to those committees to testify. Those witnesses are flying in from all over the country to testify. With all due respect, it is the taxpayers who are paying for the witnesses to get here, but that is money well spent. To get those witnesses in front of committees is money that is very well spent.

I will tell the House what is not well done. The bells ring and all of a sudden we jump up from committee. We jump into shuttle buses. We come over here. It is a 30-minute bell. Thirty minutes pass, and then we get up and vote. We are lucky if we get back to committee. Usually we do not get back to the committee. What happens? All those people who came to present at the committee go home. They fly home. That time cannot be made up.

We have to do better. Those witnesses want to give testimony. We want to hear their testimony. How are we going to do that? We are going to do that by having this discussion, which everyone in this House can contribute to.

• (1755)

I want to read from the discussion paper, because it is very important we set straight a lot of the things that are being misconstrued.

Let me start with Friday. One of the members mentioned that there was nothing in the paper about Friday. Let me read from the government House leader's discussion paper what it says about Friday:

Should Friday sittings be reapportioned, it would be important to reallocate any lost time to the remaining four days, including time lost for Question Period and Private Members' Business. This could be accomplished by having the House meet earlier on certain days. Alternatively, if Friday sittings are retained they should look like any other sitting day...

What does that mean? That means a full day.

I am going to tell the House something about my own experience and I am speaking completely honestly. I want Canadians at home to know. If I need a rest because I am exhausted, I am better here on Friday. Why? Because I put in a half day here and the rest of the day I travel home. That travel home is a rest for me. However, if I am not here on Friday, I leave here late Thursday night. I am getting home late on Thursday night and Friday morning at 7 o'clock I am at my constituency office. Friday is the day we currently sit. It is one or the other. We either make Friday a full day or we do what is in the discussion paper, and that is reapportion the hours.

This discussion paper is the start of the discussion, not the end. This business of ramming through legislation is not the way it is. This is a discussion. This is where we start.

Let me go to electronic voting, which is in the discussion paper too. There has been talk about it for 32 years. We are not saying that it is going to happen. We are asking to have a discussion on it. Why is a discussion timely? Because the West Block is being reconstructed. Therefore, if we are to have electronic voting, it might be a good idea to have the discussion now in order to accommodate it so we can follow through with electronic voting.

This is not a done deal. Nothing has been decided. It is to be talked about.

Let me move to the House calendar. Everybody is talking about the Liberals wanting to make life easier, that they want to work less. If we want to work less, then why do we say in this discussion paper "having the House sit earlier in January", which is more days, "later in June", which is more days, not less, "and earlier in September". We are talking about what to do to get the work done, to follow through on our commitments to get legislation passed. How do we use the time in the House more effectively?

Let me now talk about time allocation, which has been mentioned in the House many times. In the 41st Parliament, time allocation was used 100 times. Do members know the time that took for time allocation votes? It was used 100 times. If that happened now, it would 338 x 100 x an hour for each time, or whatever it would take. Is that the best use of our time?

The British House of Commons has used programming motions to allocate time. Some have said that this is a terrible thing. The British House has made it permanent now and the opposition, which first was against it, is now in favour of it.

I have a hard time listening to this question. The suggestion is that we want to limit the Prime Minister's questions. We have a Prime Minister who goes across the country answering questions from Canadians at an open mic. This is not about less accountability but rather about more. This is about giving more time in addition to the questions that the Prime Minister already answers.

To be honest, I am tired of it. This is about using our time to the best of our ability. This is about using taxpayer money, taxpayers who are paying our salaries. This is about better serving them.

I am going to suggest a fourth option for the hon. member who had three options, and that is to approve the motion that we put through at PROC.

• (1800)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, the problem is that we are making too many demands on the Prime Minister, who has important questions to answer across the country. I actually feel it would be selfish of us to ask him to come here once a week. I am going to propose that if Liberals are willing to consider having him once a year, that would be more than enough for us. Clearly, there is no relevance to having an official opposition, a government in waiting, a loyal opposition, loyal to the Constitution, providing an alternative way of looking at things. Clearly, hundreds of years of practice have no bearing on the way Canada should run.

Let me ask the member this question. Conservatives do not object to the discussion paper, which has mutually contradictory proposals in it, some of which might be good and some of which might be bad. We object to the fact that there is a June 2 deadline for getting all those changes made.

Routine Proceedings

We are hearing that this needs to be dragged into the 21st century. Number one, why were we not trying to drag it into the 21st century for the first year and a half of the Liberal government's mandate? Why, number two, did the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons decide to have, and is so adamant about having, a deadline that means we have to get this whole thing done before the summer?

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, on the first point about the Prime Minister, I would say that I am proud of our Prime Minister for going across the country for open mics. Those open mics are not supplementary. They are in addition to what the Prime Minister does in this House. They are in addition to the questions he is being asked and is responding to in this House.

With our proposal, we are looking at how everyone in this House can ask questions of the Prime Minister or how backbenchers can present questions to him. He wants to answer those questions. He does a brilliant job of answering questions. This is about more accountability not only of the Prime Minister but also of cabinet ministers. That is what we want to embark upon. That is the discussion we want to have.

With respect to the second issue, we want to start this discussion. We will not come up with recommendations until we have had a robust discussion. If the filibuster continues until the end of June, then of course, the date has to be extended. We are committed to ensuring that we make evidence-based decisions on the great information we are going to receive at committee.

● (1805)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague. She has used the phrases that we are here to get the work done and that we are here to become more efficient many times. One would think we were talking about a meat packing plant or an auto assembly manufacturing plant instead of the cradle of democracy of Canada.

We are talking about democracy here, and democracy's highest principles are, unfortunately, not efficiency or getting the job done. Democracy's highest principles are debate, probing, holding the government to account, and expressing our constituents' views. That is why we are sent to this place. I am sorry if my hon. colleague finds that inefficient or inconvenient, but that is what we are sent here to do.

My question is this. If it is so important to have the Prime Minister answer the questions of backbenchers, why does the Prime Minister not do that every Wednesday from here on in? There is nothing to stop him from standing this Wednesday and answering every question from any member of this House. In fact, he could do it four days a week. Why does he not do that?

Ms. Filomena Tassi: Madam Speaker, there are a number of things the member has raised.

Let me first say that, unfortunately, debate cannot take place when the bells are ringing, and that occupies a lot of time. We are talking about 30 minutes for the bells. Second, with respect to the Prime Minister answering questions, the whole point of this motion is to have a discussion to determine how we can efficiently use our time.

The third thing I want to say is this. I said this to my constituents, whose doors I knocked on. When some of my constituents found out I was a politician, they wanted to throw me off the porch. Why? It is because they wanted us to do better in this place. That is why. The commitment I made to them was that I would work hard so that the time we have in this place is totally and completely used to best serve them and their needs. That is what brought me here, and that is why I stand in this House today.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been having some wonderful discussions here. I like the ideas that are coming from the opposition and from the government benches. This is exactly the discussion that we want to have at the procedure and House affairs committee. This is why the discussion paper was put forward by the government House leader.

As was mentioned by one of the NDP members on the committee, the previous government House leader also once came to this committee and asked us to discuss how we could be a more effective, more modernized Parliament. The motion that we started this debate on today was from the interim report that the procedure and House affairs committee had put out at that time.

There are some disingenuous remarks being made in this chamber about how we as a committee had decided to proceed at that time. At that time, we had decided that we would talk about the low-hanging fruit, some of the difficult issues, some of the easier issues, and what we thought needed to be changed. At the end of it, we decided that for the sake of efficiency we would put out an interim report on the things that we could agree on at that moment, and then come back at a later date to revisit some of those hard-to-debate issues.

In that interim report, we had, I believe, four recommendations. Those recommendations were things that we were already doing in this House. I respect the work that I and my colleagues do in committee, but when we look at that report and read that interim report, one of the things that was recommended was to move the votes, if possible, up to after question period, which was an idea that the government had already been implementing with the help of the opposition.

Everyone realized what a difference that made. We did not have to run back to our offices, come back to the chamber, and waste a whole bunch of hours in the day, when we could be having effective debate in this chamber. We could be holding stakeholder meetings in our office. We could be in our committee meetings. We thought that was a great idea. Those are the things that we want to carry on with and continue discussing.

What happened at that time, though, was that there were a lot of difficult things that we wanted to discuss but could not agree on and could not get to. Those are some of the things mentioned in this discussion paper. I thank the hon. government House leader for bringing this discussion paper back to our committee and raising this debate again.

I really urge the opposition members to engage in this debate within the committee process and to examine these things with witnesses present so that we can get the scientific evidence that we need to make the decisions to move forward.

Routine Proceedings

I agreed with my colleague when she was talking about campaigning door to door. Something people do not like about Parliament is that things take a very long time. Now, I understand the need to debate things. I understand the balance that we need to strike, that we need to probe and make sure that the laws we pass in this chamber are laws that will be good for all Canadians and I understand that we need to strike that balance, but let us have a conversation. There are so many ways we could more efficient with our time.

Once again, I need to reiterate that the misinformation that the opposition is trying to put out there about the accountability of our Prime Minister is just wrong. The discussion paper does not say that the Prime Minister would only come once a week. It is in addition to all the other days that the Prime Minister does come.

Quite frankly, the opposition is correct: there is nothing that stops the Prime Minister from not coming every day right now. There is nothing that stops the Prime Minister from not coming at all. This is actually putting into effect something concrete that requires the Prime Minister to show up, and requires him, in addition to the regular days, to come for another 45 minutes.

What is wrong with the backbench MPs being able to ask questions as well? This would be an effective way of modernizing our Parliament and making some changes.

•(1810)

No one is talking about taking Fridays off. Let us make it a full day, or let us apportion those hours to other days. A lot of companies have been doing this. Canadians understand that we can increase productivity by making some of these simple changes in the House.

Not allowing this discussion to even occur is blocking the very thing we are sent here to do. We are sent here to work in committees. We are sent here to produce reports and to study issues that are not just easy, but are also hard. We are sent here to have the hard and difficult conversations. That is what we want to have. Those are the conversations we want to have at the procedure and House affairs committee. Let us get on with it. Let us have those discussions. Let us bring in witnesses. Nothing stops any member from asking the questions that they desire of those witnesses.

I know we had many witnesses before us before we put this interim report out and, quite frankly, some of those witnesses were disappointed that the recommended changes in this interim report were not as they would have liked to see. I urge the members of the House to allow us to now get back to that study and not just make it an interim report but to finalize it. Let us bring in some of those witnesses again, let us bring in others, and let us finally change some things.

Just last week, we saw a very inefficient use of time. We had a vote called to see if we should adjourn the House for the day. What happened? The opposition had called that vote, we came in and then it voted against its very own motion. These are the types of tactics that are used day in and day out in the House to slow things down, to ensure we do not pass the legislation we are sent here to pass and—

•(1815)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It being 6:16 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*English*]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred to tomorrow at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until tomorrow, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a great petition here from 100 or so members of my constituency, from Battlefords and North Battleford.

The petitioners call on the government to take palliative care seriously, to actually follow through on some of the promises it has made, and to ensure that this is covered under the Canada Health Act so the provincial and territorial governments will be entitled to the funding that is required for it.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today with a petition signed by residents of my constituency, mainly from Airdrie and Crossfield.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners call upon Parliament to support my colleague's bill, Bill C-316, by the member for Calgary Confederation, so Canadians are able to indicate their desire to donate their organs and tissues through their annual tax return. They ask that this information be shared with their provincial or territorial government for the purpose of being added to existing donor registries.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first is from constituents and people across Canada who have signed an e-petition to the Minister of Health calling for further research and testing of various controversial treatments. Members of the public want to see testing for jugular, vertebral, and azygos veins for people with multiple sclerosis and want the data from patients who have obtained this treatment to be collected to establish baselines and follow up on the collection of data. The data collected would be going to Health Canada for dissemination.

Vascular treatments for multiple sclerosis need research, and the petition asks for that.

• (1820)

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have received hundreds of signatures from people in the Toronto area on a petition that calls for the Government of Canada to press the People's Republic of China to stop discrimination against the practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong.

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who say that Blue Heron Resort in Spanish, Ontario, is great for fishing and family fun in the riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking. The petitioners call on the government to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time year-round employees continue to be recognized and taxed as small businesses.

CANADA POST

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a petition from Canadians across Ontario who call upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to add postal banking with a mandate for financial inclusion and to release the secret study it conducted on postal banking.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 841, 846, 861, 869, 870.

[Text]

Question No. 841—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to executive performance pay or bonus payments made by Public Services and Procurement Canada to its employees since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total amount paid out; (b) how many individuals received payments, broken down by (i) the dates that each individual was awarded executive performance pay or bonuses, (ii) the branch and region that each individual belonged to at the time they received executive performance pay or bonuses; (c) what

is the average amount of the payments; and (d) what is the highest amount of the payments?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board Secretariat, TBS, prescribes how performance pay is administered through the directive on the performance management program for executives. The majority of executives are eligible for performance pay, including at-risk pay, in-range increase, and potentially a bonus. The amounts depend on the performance rating. Executive pay is a responsibility of the deputy minister and the clerk, and not the minister.

With regard to (a), the total amount paid out for the performance cycle April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016, for executives eligible for performance pay was \$4,827,913.00. This amount does not include the in-range increases—i.e., the increase in annual salary—which is part of performance pay and is also determined by the performance rating.

With regard to (b), 340 executives received payments. With regard to (b)(i), most performance payments were paid December 14 and December 28, 2016. With regard to (b)(ii), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and certain information has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes personal information.

With regard to (c), the average payment amount, including bonus payments, is \$14,199.74. This is averaged out among the 340 who received payments.

With regard to (d), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and certain information has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes personal information.

Question No. 846—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:**

With regard to the government's announcement to provide 372.5 million dollars in repayable loans to Bombardier: (a) what are the terms of repayment; (b) how much is expected to be repaid, broken down by year, until the loans are repaid; and (c) what interest rate will Bombardier be charged?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the government's announcement to provide \$372.5 million in repayable loans to Bombardier, the particulars of the contribution cannot be provided as the final agreement has yet to be finalized. In addition, information that is commercially confidential and/or sensitive cannot be publicly released.

These types of contributions are subject to ongoing reporting requirements throughout the project's life cycle, including the repayment phase.

The Government of Canada is committed to the long-term viability and success of the Canadian aerospace sector, and an announcement of support for Bombardier will help secure thousands of high-quality jobs for Canadians across the country.

Routine Proceedings

The aerospace industry is one of the most innovative and export-driven industries in Canada and contributes over 211,000 quality direct and indirect jobs for Canadians and \$28 billion annually in gross domestic product to Canada's economy. Bombardier is Canada's highest private sector investor in research and development, and its position as an anchor company in the aerospace sector is vital for the success of nearly 800 suppliers in Canada.

The Government of Canada is proud to support leading-edge technology and job creation, while enabling Bombardier to grow as a globally competitive company for years to come.

Question No. 861—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the government's economic update released on November 1, 2016: (a) why were the long-term fiscal projections, including the deficit forecasts, released on that date; (b) who made the decision to withhold the release of the projections; and (c) on what date was the decision to withhold the projections made?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for over a decade now, Canada has been in a period of low economic growth, and middle-class families have found it hard to get ahead. The "Update of Long-Term Economic and Fiscal Projections" shows the impact this period of slow growth has had on the country's bottom line and speaks to the importance of making smart, necessary investments to strengthen the middle class and grow the economy in the long term. The report was timed with the release of the fiscal monitor to provide a more complete picture of Canada's fiscal position. In keeping with previous years, the report was published on a government website in an open and transparent way and made available to all Canadians. The long-term projections are based on assumptions that will inevitably evolve. Small changes in growth rates, productivity, or spending have the potential to have a big impact.

The government will continue to invest in its people, its communities, and the skills Canadians will need to prosper in the new, more innovative economy of tomorrow.

Question No. 869—**Mr. Harold Albrecht:**

With regard to VIA Rail: (a) how much are the total expenditures VIA Rail has provided to Canada 2020 since January 1, 2016; (b) what is the breakdown of each individual expenditure in (a); (c) what was the purpose of each expenditure in (a); and (d) who approved each expenditure in (a)?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of its corporate social responsibility policy, VIA Rail Canada Inc. partners with various non-governmental and non-profit organizations, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, Canada 2020, and the Public Policy Forum, as these organizations address emerging and complex public policy issues that could have an impact on passenger rail transportation. For these partnerships, VIA Rail does not provide monetary contributions to organizations, but rather an exchange of services through the provision of rail travel in exchange for access to conferences and seminars. These partnerships also include the opportunity to increase the visibility of VIA Rail's brand on partners' platforms, including the web, conferences, and seminars, in order to encourage more Canadians to use our passenger train service.

In some instances, VIA Rail pays the required fees to attend conferences or seminars, as it has for recent events organized by the C.D. Howe Institute, the Manning Centre, Canada 2020, the

Broadbent Institute, chambers of commerce, and the Conference Board of Canada.

With regard to (a), VIA Rail's expenditures, disbursed in the form of an exchange of services with Canada 2020 and conference fees, are \$17,354.04.

With regard to (b), these expenditures include \$17,000 in rail travel since January 1, 2016, and \$354.04 in conference attendance fees since January 1, 2016.

With regard to (c), the purpose of the two expenditures includes the exchange of services through the provision of rail travel, conference attendance fees, and increasing the visibility of VIA Rail's brand.

With regard to (d), Jacques Fauteux, VIA Rail's director of government and community relations, approved the expenditures.

Question No. 870—**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:**

With regard to the commitment on Page 80 of the Liberal Party's election platform related to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the "tax gap": (a) what is the current tax gap level in Canada; (b) when will the CRA be publicly releasing the full statistics relating to the annual tax evasion and the tax gap levels; (c) has the CRA provided the Parliamentary Budget Officer with the information required so that he can do an analysis on tax gap levels and, if so, on what date was the information provided; and (d) does the government have any annual goals or timeliness for reducing the tax gap levels and, if so, what are the goals for each of the next five years?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to parts (a) and (b), as a first step in its work on the tax gap, the CRA published on June 30, 2016, an estimate of the GST/HST gap as well as a conceptual study on tax gap estimation that explained the benefits and the limitations of the concept. The CRA is committed to ongoing work and analysis on the various components of the gap. Like most tax administrations worldwide, the CRA does not estimate an overall tax gap covering all taxes. Some tax administrations estimate components of the tax gap where there is available data. For example, tax gap estimates of value-added taxes, such as the GST/HST, are the most common.

As part of the CRA's ongoing work on the tax gap, it has committed to publishing a series of additional papers on other aspects of the tax gap over the next two to three years. Some of these papers will contain estimates of particular components of the tax gap, while others will be more theoretical in nature. The next paper will be published this spring.

This is consistent with the government's response to the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance, "Canada Revenue Agency's Efforts to Combat Tax Avoidance and Evasion", recommendation 7, tabled in Parliament on February 22, 2017.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (c), with respect to requests to provide the parliamentary budget officer, the PBO, with data to estimate the tax gap, expert legal advice confirmed that provisions contained in both section 241 of the Income Tax Act and section 295 of the Excise Tax Act prevent the CRA from releasing taxpayer information that could directly or indirectly lead to the identification of specific taxpayers. The CRA had offered to provide aggregate anonymized data, maintaining that this would allow the PBO to undertake research and provide independent analysis while enabling the CRA to safeguard confidentiality of tax information, as required by the provisions noted above. This alternative was declined. As the CRA continues its work on the tax gap, it looks forward to continued collaboration with all parties involved and acknowledges the work accomplished thus far by all stakeholders.

With regard to part (d), the experience of countries that estimate their tax gaps does not support targeting specific tax gap reductions in specific years, as many factors other than compliance activities can influence the level of the tax gap, such as economic cycles and policy changes. For example, during an economic downturn, more individuals may not be able to pay all of their taxes on time.

That said, many of the CRA's compliance efforts are expected to help reduce the tax gap in the medium term. The revenue impact from audit grew from \$8.6 billion in 2012-13 to \$12.8 billion in 2015-16. Integrity measures announced in budget 2016 are expected to increase tax revenues by more than \$1.2 billion over five years, starting in 2016-17. In addition, budget 2016 announced investments for the CRA to enhance its efforts to crack down on tax evasion and combat tax avoidance, including hiring additional auditors and developing robust business intelligence infrastructure, goals, and targets associated with audit investment. The hiring of additional auditors and specialists who will help detect, pursue, and deliver sanctions to those who avoid paying the tax they owe will increase the number of examinations focused on high-risk individual taxpayers from 600 to 3000 a year within five years, and on high-risk multinational corporations. The CRA plans to expand its review of electronic funds transfers in 2017 by reviewing over 100,000 transactions for four additional jurisdictions of concern. The expected revenue impact of these and other measures is \$2.6 billion over five years.

Budget 2016 also announced funding for the CRA to improve its ability to collect outstanding tax debts. The agency has committed to collecting an additional \$7.4 billion over a five-year period.

As well, the CRA continues to implement a strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises that includes the liaison officer initiative, industry campaign approach, and office audit letter campaign, which provide assistance and information to taxpayers on how to be compliant and avoid potential tax pitfalls.

CRA interventions, which focus on areas of higher risk and target the underground economy, will continue to benefit from the use of business intelligence and data mining capabilities designed to better predict taxpayer behaviour.

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that if a supplementary response to Question No. 580, originally tabled on December 9, 2016, and if a revised response to Question No. 763, originally tabled on January 30, 2017, and if the government's response to Questions Nos. 580, 763, 842-845, 847-860, 862-868, and 871-876 could be made orders for return, those returns would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 580—**Mr. Larry Maguire:**

With regard to the government's participation in the Global Progress 2016 forum held in Montreal on September 14 and 15, 2016: (a) what is the total of all costs associated with the government's involvement in the forum; and (b) what is the itemized breakdown of all costs associated with the government's involvement in the forum?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 763—**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:**

With regard to the survey of 4273 people conducted by Vox Pop Labs between October 23, 2016, and November 22, 2016, that served to provide the base data for the survey conducted through the mydemocracy.ca website: (a) what were the questions asked during this survey; (b) what were the results for each question; (c) what were the properties of each of the clusters, or archetypes, identified in this survey; and (d) for each of the eight themes and graphs identified in the mydemocracy.ca website (i) how were the themes quantified, (ii) what was the range and distribution of answers, (iii) what was the mean of each cluster, or archetype, (iv) which of the clusters were statistically significantly different from one another?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 842—**Mr. Kelly McCauley:**

With regard to Table 6 "Horizontal Items (dollars) – Funding to support the management of the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber initiative, including negotiations towards a new agreement, ongoing monitoring of exports, and legal preparations for possible trade remedies action" in Supplementary Estimates (A), 2016-17, used before negotiations officially resumed on February 5, 2017: (a) what was the allotment used for legal fees, and related to this allotment, (i) how much was spent on a retainer for legal counsel, (ii) how many of these lawyers worked directly on the softwood lumber initiative; (b) which departments provided the funding, broken down by the amount spent by each department; (c) what expenses were claimed by the lawyers who were retained, broken down by individual lawyer and their claimed (i) travel expenses, (ii) accommodation expenses, (iii) meal expenses, (iv) incidental expenses, (v) per diems; (d) how many government employees or full-time equivalents were assigned to provide legal advice on this matter; (e) how many outside lawyers were retained; (f) how many hours per month did each of the lawyers in (d) and (e) spend working on the softwood lumber initiative; and (g) how many meetings were held relating to the softwood lumber initiative, and who was present at each of meeting, broken down by meeting?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 843—Mr. McCauley (Edmonton West):**

With regard to public service training for the Phoenix Pay System: (a) what was the Public Services and Procurement training plan for public servants prior to February 10, 2016, (i) was this training mandatory for all public servants, (ii) how many public servants successfully completed this training, broken down by department; (b) what was the Public Services and Procurement training plan for public servants between February 10, 2016, and April 21, 2016, (i) was this training mandatory for all public servants, (ii) how many public servants successfully completed the training, broken down by department; (c) how many compensation advisors were employed by the government on February 20, 2016, (i) how many successfully completed training referenced in (a), broken down by department; (d) how many compensation advisors were employed by the government on April 21, 2016, (i) how many successfully completed training referenced in (b), broken down by department; (e) what measures were taken by Public Services and Procurement Canada to confirm training for Phoenix was completed by each department; (f) if Public Services and Procurement Canada does not have access to these numbers, which department does?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 844—Ms. Tracey Ramsey:

With regard to government funding in the riding of Essex, for each fiscal year since 2005-2006, inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency providing the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 845—Ms. Marilyn Gladu:

With regard to expenditures made by the government since October 19, 2016, under government-wide object code 3259 (Miscellaneous expenditures not Elsewhere Classified): what are the details of each expenditure including (i) vendor name, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services provided, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 847—Mr. Guy Lauzon:

With regard to the government's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2021: (a) how many government employees are currently assigned to work on the bid on a (i) full-time basis, (ii) part-time basis; (b) how many government employees are projected to work on the bid in each of the next five years on a (i) full-time basis, (ii) part-time basis; and (c) what are the projected costs for the bid, broken down by line item, object, and fiscal year for each of the next five fiscal years, beginning with the 2016-17 fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 848—Mr. Glen Motz:

With regard to altered or fraudulent passports or visa documents discovered by the Canada Border Services Agency at ports of entry, since January 2016: (a) what is the monthly breakdown of such discoveries; (b) what is the monthly breakdown, further broken down by country represented on the document; and (c) what is the monthly breakdown, further broken down by last embarkation and disembarkation point of the traveler?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 849—Hon. Tony Clement:

With regard to comments made by former National Security Advisor Richard Fadden in the *Globe and Mail* on January 15, 2017, and information the government has about the actions of foreign governments to influence the 2015 Canadian election: (a) is the government aware of any attempts by Russia to influence the 2015 Canadian election through (i) hacking or other cyber espionage, (ii) influence operations, (iii) propaganda or false news reports, (iv) other intelligence activities; (b) is the government aware of any attempts by agents sponsored by Russia to influence

the 2015 Canadian election through (i) hacking or other cyber espionage, (ii) influence operations, (iii) propaganda or false news reports, (iv) other intelligence activities; (c) is the government aware of any attempts by any other country, other than Russia, to influence the 2015 Canadian election through (i) hacking or other cyber espionage, (ii) influence operations, (iii) propaganda or false news reports, (iv) other intelligence activities; and (d) is the government aware of any attempts by agents sponsored by any other country to influence the 2015 Canadian election through (i) hacking or other cyber espionage, (ii) influence operations, (iii) propaganda or false news reports, (iv) other intelligence activities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 850—Hon. Candice Bergen:

With regard to the Conflict of Interest Act and the Prime Minister, since October 1, 2016: (a) did anyone in the Privy Council Office inform the Prime Minister or the Office of the Prime Minister that riding in a private helicopter may violate the Conflict of Interest Act; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, who informed the Prime Minister or the Office of the Prime Minister; (c) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, who was provided with the information; and (d) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, on what date was the Prime Minister or member of the Office of the Prime Minister informed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 851—Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to user fees collected by the government: (a) what is the complete list of user fees collected; and (b) what are the specific details of each fee collected, including for each (i) a description or summary, (ii) the current rate or rates, (iii) the total amount collected during the 2015-2016 fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 852—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to a federal carbon tax or price on carbon: (a) what analysis has been conducted from 2015 to present by the government with regard to the impact on Indigenous family household budgets and Indigenous community budgets; (b) what analysis has been conducted from 2015 to present by Employment and Social Development Canada with regard to the impact on Indigenous persons and families falling below the low-income cut-off line; (c) what analysis has been conducted from 2015 to present by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada with regard to the impact on (i) Indigenous persons and families falling below the low-income cut-off line, (ii) the cost of building and maintaining community infrastructure, including power generation; (d) what analysis has been conducted from 2015 to present by Health Canada with regard to the impact on the cost of delivering health care on-reserve; (e) when fully implemented, how much does the government anticipate the \$50-a-tonne price on carbon will increase food prices for the average Indigenous family of four, in each province and territory; (f) how much does the government anticipate a \$50-a-tonne carbon tax will increase electricity costs, in percentage terms, in each province and territory; (g) has the government calculated the average financial impact of the carbon tax on Indigenous people living below the low-income cut-off line and, if so, what is the average monetary impact on the average Indigenous family of four living below the low-income cut-off line; (h) how many Indigenous individuals does the government anticipate will fall beneath the low-income cut-off line as a result of a \$50-a-tonne price on carbon; (i) did either the Department of Finance Canada or Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada conduct analyses regarding the impact of a \$50-a-tonne price on carbon on Indigenous low-income families and, if so, what were the conclusions of these analyses; (j) did either the Department of Finance Canada or the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada conduct an analyses regarding the impact of a \$50-a-tonne price on carbon on the distribution of wealth and income in Canada and, if so, what were the conclusions of these analyses; and (k) by how much does the government estimate a \$50-a-tonne price on carbon will reduce carbon emissions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 853—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to Canada's Indigenous peoples: how many Memorandum of Understanding agreements did the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs sign with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples between November 4, 2015, and February 9, 2017, broken down by (i) name of group, (ii) location of official signing ceremony, (iii) date of official signing ceremony?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 854—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the announcement by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs on May 10, 2016, that the government intends to adopt and implement the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: (a) what are the details of all the consultations conducted by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs between May 10, 2016, to present, including for each consultation the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name and title of the First Nations, groups, or individuals consulted, (iv) recommendations that were made to the Minister; and (b) with regard to consultations in (a), what is the (i) total of travel costs covered by the government, (ii) total of accommodation costs covered by the government, (iii) daily per diem rate to which stakeholders are entitled, (iv) total paid out in per diem?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 855—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to First Nations financial transparency: (a) how many First Nations bands have complied with the requirements of the First Nations Financial Transparency Act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, by making available to all band members audited consolidated financial statements, the Schedule of Remuneration and Expenses, the auditor's written report respecting the consolidated financial statements, and the auditor's report or the review engagement report; (b) which bands, leaders, communities, and organizations has the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs consulted regarding financial transparency; (c) with regard to consultations in (b), what was the location of each consultation; and (d) for each consultation in (b) in which stakeholders or other individuals being consulted were required to travel, what is the (i) total of travel costs covered by the government, (ii) total of accommodation costs covered by the government, (iii) daily per diem rate to which stakeholders are entitled, (iv) total amount paid out in per diems?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 856—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to the budgets for ministerial offices, broken down by Minister, including the Prime Minister: (a) how many exempt staff members are in each Minister's office; (b) what is the total budget for salaries for each office for the 2016-2017 fiscal year; (c) what is the projected budget for salaries for each office for the 2017-2018 fiscal year; (d) what is the overall budget for each Ministerial office for the 2016-2017 fiscal year; and (e) what is the overall projected budget for each ministerial office for the 2017-2018 fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 857—Mr. Tom Lukiwski:

With regard to delegations from China hosted or paid for by Global Affairs Canada, since November 4, 2015: (a) what were the dates on which each delegation was hosted; (b) what was the size of each delegation; (c) what was the title of the highest ranking government official for each delegation; (d) what were the total costs paid for by the Canadian government for each delegation; and (e) what is the itemized breakdown of each cost referred to in (d)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 858—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

With regard to payments given to First Nations families through the Canada child benefit (CCB): (a) how many First Nations families living on reserve are eligible for CCB payments; (b) how many of these families are currently receiving CCB payments; (c) with regard to First Nations families on reserve who are eligible for CCB payments, and are not currently receiving these payments, why are they not receiving these payments; and (d) what is the government's plan to improve the distribution of CCB benefits to eligible First Nations families who are not currently receiving these benefits?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 859—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

With regard to the Community Futures Program in Ontario: (a) how much funding was given to the program for each fiscal year from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017, with each year's total broken down by (i) the total amount of funding

distributed by FedDev Ontario, (ii) the total amount of funding distributed by FedNor, (iii) the total amount of funding given to each Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) in Ontario; (b) what CFDCs in Ontario were reduced in funding in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, broken down by federal electoral district in which each CFDC is located; (c) how much funding was reduced for each CFDC, broken down by individual CFDC; (d) why were certain CFDCs reduced in funding, broken down by individual CFDC; and (e) what rationale was provided to each CFDC for the reduction in their funding, broken down by individual CFDC?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 860—Mrs. Karen Vecchio:

With regard to usage of the Canada 150 logo: (a) how many total applications have been processed by the Department of Canadian Heritage, broken down by (i) individual applications, (ii) authorized representatives of groups, (iii) organizations, (iv) companies, (v) commercial organizations, (vi) provincial, territorial, or municipal governments, (vii) Members of Parliament, (viii) Senators; (b) how many applications have been approved, broken down by the categories in (a); (c) how many applications have been denied usage, broken down by the subcategories in (a); (d) how many applications are currently awaiting review or in the midst of being processed, broken down by the categories in (a); (e) for the denied applications in (c), why were these applications denied, broken down by applicant; (f) for each application that has been processed, what is the mandated processing time for applications; and (g) what has been the average processing time for applications?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 862—Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:

With regard to the Phoenix pay system: (a) how many individuals received (i) overpayments, (ii) underpayments, during the 2016 calendar year by the Phoenix pay system; (b) how many individuals (i) owed the government money, (ii) were owed money as of January 1, 2017, as a result of receiving either overpayments or underpayments during the 2016 calendar year; (c) what specific measures have been put in place by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) related to individuals who received overpayments or underpayments in 2016; (d) as of February 13, 2017, had the Minister of National Revenue provided any directives to CRA regarding relief for the individuals in (a); and (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, what are the dates and contents of any such directives?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 863—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to the government's recent approval and future efforts to facilitate the construction of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline: (a) which federal and provincial government agencies, departments, and services has the government met with regarding the implementation of the pipeline; (b) what are the dates on which the meetings in (a) took place; and (c) what were the topics or subjects discussed at each of the meetings in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 864—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to aircraft usage by the Canadian Embassy and Consulate in Ukraine and by the Canadian Embassy in Poland between May 25, 2016, and July 13, 2016, excluding regularly scheduled commercial flights: (a) what flights or aircraft rental were paid for or utilized by the embassies or consulate; (b) what were the costs associated with each flight or aircraft rental; and (c) what were the details of each flight, including (i) date, (ii) departure location, (iii) arrival location, (iv) list of passengers, (v) type of aircraft?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 865—Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to the answer to Order Paper question Q-616 on the budgets of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and for Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB): (a) how do the departments follow Treasury Board Secretariat policies of internal control, as well as provisions in the Financial Administration Act, if they do not track base spending and sunseting funds; (b) how do the departments project future funding if they are not tracking what funds are sunseting and what funds are in base spending; (c) how do the departments determine necessary additional budget investments without tracking what funding sunsets; (d) how does the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs provide information about base spending on the sections of its website entitled (i) National First Nations Consolidated Infrastructure Investment Report 2014-15, (ii) National First Nations Infrastructure Investment Plan 2015-2016, if it claims to not track base spending; (e) how did the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs calculate, in its answer to Order Paper question Q-616, the spending above the two per cent cap both for the 22% figure and the 16% figure; (f) what are the details of the calculation in (e); (g) what is the formula with which the calculation in (e) was made; (h) what is the amount of money that is the two per cent base spending for 2016-2017 that the Department used to calculate its answer to Order Paper question Q-616; (i) what is the amount of money from budget 2016-2017, broken down by program, that the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs used in its answer to Order Paper question Q-616 to calculate the amount above the two per cent cap the government would be spending; (j) did the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs use the same formula to provide the amount the Department spent above the two per cent cap for each year since 1994; (k) for each year since the two per cent cap was put in place, what amount of money in both dollars and percentage was above the level of funding that would have been provided under the two per cent funding cap as calculated with the formula used in the answer to section (d) of Order Paper question Q-616; (l) did the Office for the Coordination of Parliamentary Returns (OCPR) at the Privy Council Office (PCO) assign Order Paper question Q-616 regarding analysis conducted by the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs; (m) what is the title of the individual who put together the response; (n) on what date was the response finalized; (o) did OCPR assign any part of the analysis of Order Paper question Q-616 to the Department of Finance; and (p) did anyone from either the Office of the Prime Minister, the Office of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, or the Minister's office provide any advice or instruction regarding the response to Order Paper question Q-616 and, if so, what are the details of these communications, including (i) the titles of the individuals who provided the advice or instruction, (ii) the specific advice or instructions that were given?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 866—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to Phase 1 and the second Long-Term Infrastructure Plan under the New Infrastructure Plan undertaken by Infrastructure Canada: (a) what provinces and territories have submitted lists of priorities or projects to be funded under Phase 1 and for each, (i) what is the itemized list of projects and priorities from each province and territory, (ii) how many of the projects listed in (a)(i) have been approved for funding, (iii) what is the federal contribution of each project or priority listed under (a)(ii), (iv) what is the construction start date of each project or priority listed under (a)(ii) if such a date has already passed; (b) what provinces and territories have submitted lists of priorities or projects to be funded under the Public Transit: Faster Commutes and Innovative Communities program under the Long-Term Infrastructure Plan, including (i) the itemized list of projects or priorities from each province and territory, (ii) the number of the projects listed in (b)(i) that have been approved for funding, (iii) the federal contribution of each project or priority listed under (b)(ii); (c) what provinces and territories have submitted lists of priorities or projects to be funded under the Green Infrastructure: Clean Air, Clean Water program under the Long-Term Infrastructure Plan, including (i) the itemized list of projects or priorities from each province and territory, (ii) the number of the projects listed in (c)(i) that have been approved for funding, (iii) the federal contribution of each project and priority listed under (c)(ii); (d) what provinces and territories have submitted lists of priorities or projects to be funded under the Rural and Northern Communities program under the Long-Term Infrastructure Plan, including (i) the itemized list of projects or priorities from each province and territory, (ii) the number of projects listed in (d)(i) that have been approved for funding, (iii) the federal contribution of each project or priority listed under (d)(ii); (e) what amount of money has been earmarked for each project listed in (a)(ii), (b)(ii), (c)(ii) and (d)(ii); (f) what data was used to determine which projects would be selected; and (g) when will these projects be announced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 867—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to spending by Environment and Climate Change Canada, between November 4, 2015, and February 10, 2017: (a) what amount has been announced, committed, promised, and spent outside of Canada on (i) other sovereign states, (ii) international programs, (iii) global initiatives, (iv) United Nations initiatives or programs, (v) for-profit programs and organizations, (vi) not-for-profit programs and organizations; and (b) what data was used to determine which projects, countries, or initiatives from (a)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) would be funded?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 868—Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

With regard to spending by Global Affairs Canada, between November 4, 2015, and February 10, 2017: (a) what amount of money has been announced, committed, promised, and spent outside of Canada on (i) other sovereign states, (ii) international programs, (iii) global initiatives, (iv) United Nations initiatives or programs, (v) for-profit programs and organizations, (vi) not-for-profit programs and organizations; and (b) what data was used to determine which projects, countries, or initiatives from (a)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) would be funded?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 871—Ms. Georgina Jolibois:

With regard to funding for Athabasca Health Authority (AHA) in Saskatchewan: (a) what is the current level of funding for the AHA and what portions of that are provided by the federal government and the provincial government, if that amount is known; (b) which services must the AHA provide to the five main communities it covers and what service standards must be met in order to receive federal funding; (c) how many staff, broken down by profession, work for the AHA; (d) what standards, metrics, or other frameworks does the federal government use to evaluate the effectiveness of mental health service delivery by the AHA; (e) what is the standard process by which an individual gains access to a mental health worker at the AHA; (f) what criteria are used to assess the seriousness of a case when individuals are seeking face-to-face access to a mental health worker through the AHA; (g) has the federal government conducted any service delivery evaluations or staff conduct surveys of the AHA and, if so, what are the details of all such studies and surveys?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 872—Ms. Georgina Jolibois:

With regard to the additional \$69 million in funding for Indigenous mental health services announced in June 2016: (a) what is the itemized list of all entities and programs that have received a portion of this additional funding since June 2016; (b) which communities are served by each entity or program in (a); and (c) what criteria have been used to assess applications or requests for this funding, or to guide proactive allocations of this additional funding?

(Return tabled)

*The Budget*Question No. 873—**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:**

With regard to Employment Insurance (EI) regular benefits received between December 1, 2015, and January 31, 2017, and Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIA) granted after November 5, 2015: (a) how many individuals in Atlantic Canada, with previous work experience in fish and seafood processing plants, were receiving EI regular benefits, broken down by month; (b) how many Canadians at any point received EI regular benefits at the same time as one of their former employers employed temporary foreign workers, broken down by month; (c) how many Temporary Foreign Workers did the Department grant positive LMIA decisions in National Occupation Classification positions in which EI regular beneficiary recipients in the same EI Economic Region had prior work experience; (d) how many LMIA did Employment and Social Development Canada grant for Temporary Foreign Workers in fish and seafood processing positions, broken down by (i) month, from December 1, 2015, to January 31, 2017, (ii) name of Fish and Seafood Processing Plant, (iii) number of Temporary Foreign Worker positions, (iv) number of EI regular benefit recipients with previous fish plant experience living within a one-hour commute (one-way) of the Fish and Seafood Processing Plant; (e) which organizations were granted LMIA after November 5, 2015, broken down by (i) month, from December 1, 2015, to January 31, 2017, (ii) name of Fish and Seafood Processing Plant, (iii) number of Temporary Foreign Worker positions, (iv) number of EI recipients living within a 40 kilometre distance of the Fish and Seafood Processing Plant; and (f) how many Temporary Foreign Workers were employed in National Occupation Classifications that were formerly held by EI recipients in the same Employment Insurance Economic Region, broken down by (i) Employment Insurance Economic Region, (ii) month, from December 1, 2015, to January 31, 2017; (iii) National Occupation Classification, including occupation name, (iv) number of EI recipients formerly employed in that National Occupation Classification, (v) number of Temporary Foreign Workers Employed in that National Occupation Classification whose LMIA were approved, (vi) cumulative totals for each column?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 874—**Mr. Harold Albrecht:**

With regard to the Canada 150 program: (a) how many employees or full-time equivalents (FTEs) have been assigned to work on the Canada 150 program; (b) how many employees or FTEs have been temporarily assigned to the Canada 150 program; and (c) what is the breakdown of departments and sections where the temporarily assigned employees or FTEs worked prior to being assigned to the Canada 150 program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 875—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:**

With regard to the government's responses to Questions on the Order Paper since January 1, 2016: what directives have been issued by the Director of Issues Management in the Office of the Prime Minister, other members of the Issues Management section of the Office of the Prime Minister, or as a result of advice or direction given by the Issues Management section of the Office of the Prime Minister, broken down by (i) question number, (ii) content of directive or advice, (iii) date of directive or advice, (iv) the individual who issued the directive?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 876—**Mr. Alupa Clarke:**

With regard to the fighter jets procurement and any contact with Lockheed Martin: (a) what was the most recently projected cost of F-35 Lightning II aircraft; (b) what is the estimated annual operating and maintenance cost for the F-35 Lightning II fleet; (c) what are the (i) dates, (ii) times, (iii) locations, (iv) lists of attendees, including their titles, of all meetings between the government and Lockheed Martin since November 4, 2015; and (d) what are the details of all communications between (i) all officials in the Office of the Minister of National Defence and Lockheed Martin since November 4, 2015, (ii) all officials in the Office of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Lockheed Martin since November 4, 2015?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Pickering—Uxbridge.

When we took office in 2015, we knew that Canadian families had been discouraged by an economy that just was not working for them. We heard from Canadians from all walks of life that they were worried about their future and the current state of the economy and were looking for a government that would believe in them and invest in them.

In my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, I have spoken with families who are facing the challenges of an economy in a world that is rapidly changing. While we see these many challenges, we must also see the opportunities. I am proud of budget 2017 for seeing the optimism in a changing world and tapping into the opportunities for Canadians. Optimism and ambition have always been the telling story of Canadians. We are innovative, creative, compassionate people, who put our family first and believe that better is always possible.

To me, budget 2017 is about the empowerment of Canadians, empowering families, young people, women, and indigenous communities. It is also about supporting businesses and industries to succeed, not just here in Canada but around the world. Budget 2017 is an investment in the future of Canadians. Budget 2017 is a budget that I truly believe will empower communities and support constituents, addressing the vulnerable in our community, but also creating opportunities for families and generations to come.

Adjournment Proceedings

As chair of the Standing Committee on Innovation, Science and Technology, and a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons With Disabilities, I have sat at the tables to listen to Canadians share their thoughts about our innovation sector, as well as our social sector. I have had the opportunity to speak with experts, academics, and everyday Canadians on the issues ranging from poverty reduction and labour shortages to supporting our industries and encouraging more women on corporate boards. The budget shows an understanding that these challenges, while distinct, are also interconnected. Quite simply, it is a reflection of the reality that Canadians are facing.

Budget 2017 is a strategy. It is a strategy to put Canadians ahead in global markets on the forefront of innovation and skills while at the same time supporting the urgent needs of vulnerable Canadians who have slipped through the cracks of a system that has not previously worked for them.

Our government is a government that looks to the future and knows that investing in modern skills training today will ensure collective success tomorrow. I know my community is filled with families who work hard each and every day so that their children can have a better future than their own, yet too many young people in our communities are struggling to find good-paying jobs after completing their education. A rapidly changing labour market and global workforce is presenting unprecedented challenges for our youth. Budget 2017 proposes a variety of measures that will support young Canadians in their transition to the workforce, as well as adult Canadians who are trying to adapt to a changing workforce.

The budget will expand on our youth employment strategy, investing \$395.5 million over three years to help more than 33,000 vulnerable youth develop the skills they need to get back to school, create 15,000 new green jobs, and provide over 1,600 new employment opportunities in the heritage sector.

Additionally, budget 2017 will support the creation of a co-op and work integrated program for young people, particularly in STEM and business programs, while also renewing the government's support for pathways to education Canada. This is a program that assists low-income youth to complete high school and transition to the workforce or post-secondary education.

I am also proud that budget 2017 will equip our young people with the skills to succeed in a rapidly changing labour market by investing \$50 million over two years for digital skills training, such as coding. Preparing our young people with the appropriate skills and abilities will help them and empower them to succeed in a modern job market.

As the chair of the industry committee, I have heard first-hand how important it is for our youth to have digital skills to be able to compete in a global workforce. This measure will not only help Canadians find good-paying jobs when they enter the labour market, but will also help Canada to be on the cutting edge of digital innovation and technology. This is a win-win that I hope everyone in the House can get on board with.

● (1825)

We are also helping adult Canadians retrain and develop new skills for today's modern labour market through changes to employment insurance, Canada student grants, and Canada student loans.

Changes to employment insurance will help unemployed Canadians receive skills training and get back on their feet without necessarily putting them at risk of losing their benefits, a barrier we heard at the human resources committee quite often that prevented successful re-entry into the labour market for so many.

Likewise, budget 2017 commits over \$300 million over three years to assist adult Canadians with children who wish to go back to school to upgrade their skills.

Making investments is not about handouts. Over and over again at the human resources committee, we heard that it is about smart, calculated investments and partnerships that will most successfully empower Canadians to address the challenges we collectively face.

At our committee we also heard about the distinct correlation between mental health and poverty. As per commitments in budget 2016 and negotiations in the past year, my province of British Columbia will receive an additional \$654.7 million over the next 10 years for mental health initiatives. This is in addition to the Canada health transfer of \$6.7 billion in the 2017-18 year, which is an increase of \$194.9 million from the previous year. Improving access to mental health initiatives will not only support millions of Canadians who struggle with mental health but will also work proactively to address a key contributor to poverty in Canada.

With respect to supporting vulnerable Canadians, job training is also one of the most effective—

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, it is now 6:30 p.m., and the time for debate has expired. The member will have three minutes left the next time this matter is before the House.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have just pulled myself away from the Senate, a House which I do not usually get to be in. I heard Dr. Buffy Sainte-Marie talk about her vision for the country that we want together. She said, "We truly want to move our country forward." It was a beautiful presentation and a great honour to be a member of Parliament and to hear words like those in these Houses.

Adjournment Proceedings

I will pick up on some of the conversation we were having about four months ago about marine protection and how to move our country forward toward a sustainable way to protect our coastline and sensitive environments from oil spills, and a recent success story that I heard about in my own riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. It was a fantastic presentation by local innovators.

In south Nanaimo, Ace Innovation Solutions is designing oil spill response equipment that might address some of the immediate needs we have when a small or large spill happens. It has a barge. It has a large extractor that floats, a small extractor that can fit inside a bilge tank, a very common source of oil spills on our coast, and also a portable unit that has a three-metre collapsible boom that can sit on a dock or on a boat and can pick up 500 litres of diesel per hour.

There was a very alarming spill that happened around one of the fish farms up in Echo Bay north of Vancouver Island. This was in the news about three weeks ago. The proponents of Ace Innovations said that their machine would have been able to act quickly and in a very responsive way without waiting for outside equipment if the fish farm had had this equipment on hand. Their machinery skims the surface of the ocean and picks up diesel, motor oil, gasoline, crude oil, and any other type of oil immediately.

It was very encouraging to see this small business finding innovative solutions. We very much hope that the federal government wants to partner with that business, work with it, and especially tighten the response times so that anybody who spills oil is required to have the equipment available to take fast action.

It has been five months since the oceans protection plan was announced by the government. I wish there were more we could point to that would show that our country is truly, actively moving forward.

We do not yet have a legislated tanker ban on the north coast. That was one of the announcements. We do not yet have more certainty around bitumen response. This is a sticky oil. When it hits the water, the Minister of Transport said in January it is not known what it does. In fact, there have been a number of studies that have said it may well sink. However, the minister was willing to approve the Kinder Morgan pipeline and its associated bitumen oil tankers in the absence of his having confidence that there was a way to clean it up, which is extremely worrying. We have not seen anything on abandoned vessels in the budget.

I would like to know from the minister's representative, what good news do we have to celebrate regarding actual changes on the ground that will help coastal communities prevent an oil spill?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, improving marine safety and formalizing an oil tanker moratorium on British Columbia's north coast are indeed priorities of this government.

On November 7, 2016, Prime Minister Trudeau announced the oceans protection plan. This comprehensive national plan is an investment of \$1.5 billion over five years in long-needed coastal protections. This plan—

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that she is not to mention the Prime Minister's name here or any other member of Parliament.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Madam Speaker, this plan will create a world-leading marine safety system, including new preventive and response measures to better protect our waters and coasts; restore and protect marine ecosystem and habitats; and strengthen partnerships with indigenous communities.

For example, we are going to ensure the Canadian Coast Guard has the equipment and tools it needs to better protect our waterways. That means more rescue stations and towing capacity to respond more quickly and effectively to save lives and protect the environment. We will also be supporting new and better methods for cleaning up oil spills, building local emergency response capacity, and strengthening our ability to move goods and resources safely.

On November 29, 2016, we also announced that the government is delivering on its commitment to Canadians to formalize a moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic on British Columbia's north coast. The Minister of Transport will be introducing legislation this year in order to provide a higher level of environmental protection for the Canadian coastline around Dixon Entrance, Hecate Strait, and Queen Charlotte Sound. The moratorium area extends from the Canada-U.S. border in the north down to the point on B.C.'s mainland adjacent to the northern tip of Vancouver Island, and this also includes Haida Gwaii.

The moratorium will apply to the shipment of crude oil as defined by the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, but it will also apply to persistent oil products that are heavier and, when spilled, break up and dissipate slowly. These new initiatives will help us be better prepared and equipped to protect these sensitive coastal waters.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I was asking about a permanent ban, not a moratorium, so I would like to hear more from the member about that. There is an abundance of science and an abundance of community requests. This would be absolutely in keeping with the government's commitments.

I would also like to know this from the member. We agree on the broad intention, but I really need to know the specifics. When is the government going to move beyond words and into action on these other items, such as oil spill response time and legislation to solve the abandoned vessel problem? When will the commitments of the oceans protection plan be enacted in law?

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Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, improving marine safety and formalizing an oil tanker moratorium are indeed priorities of this government. The minister and his officials travelled across the country from Haida Gwaii to Iqaluit to St. John's to hear Canadians' perspectives in their own communities and territories on an oil tanker moratorium and improving marine safety. He met with stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, other levels of government, and indigenous groups to listen and gather input. All of this is to say that we have worked very hard to make sure all the voices were heard.

We are delivering on these priorities by investing in long-needed coastal protections under the oceans protection plan and we will be introducing moratorium legislation later this year. These initiatives will make our coastlines safer, more vibrant, and better protected.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister, in his response to my question regarding sexual misconduct in the military, seemed to indicate that with the results of the Operation Honour survey, the military now had a handle on the scope of the issue of military sexual trauma and could now root it out. The problem is that the data gathered did not take into account those who left the military or were in the process of leaving. It also left out both recruits and those on course, which I might point out, according to American research, is the time sexual misconduct is most likely to occur.

The minister is working with incomplete information and expects to fix the problem. That is very problematic and needs to be addressed. Even if we take the information from the report and start addressing sexual misconduct, I think the minister will find that the problem is deeply rooted. I remain concerned that the minister's plan will not even come close to addressing the issues.

The struggles of many suffering from military sexual trauma are on the public record, but I think it is important to share some information this evening.

The veterans affairs committee heard testimony from the founder of It's Just 700, an organization that is advocating for and supporting those with military sexual trauma. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary knows the origins of the name. It comes from the reaction of the military community to the 2015 external review of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces. The hostility towards those facing military sexual trauma was made clear when MST survivors were dismissed as “only 700 making complaints”.

The problem is deeply rooted. The testimony heard at the veterans affairs committee included statements from MST survivors. I am going to read some now so that the House can truly understand how difficult this issue is.

My military doctor started pushing for a medical release at my first appointment with her, following the assault, before I had even seen a psychiatrist, started meds, started seeing a psychologist, or even wrapped my head around the fact that I had been raped.

Another survivor said:

The medical personnel told me that rape victims were not sent to see psychologists and that the priority was given to soldiers with combat-related trauma.

These men and women are struggling, and when they do speak up, it becomes more difficult for them. As we heard from It's Just 700:

There are still a lot of people being penalized for talking, and the retaliation part has not been set yet. We've pushed people to report, but we haven't actually provided support when they do...

The witness also pointed out that spouses of those who report military sexual trauma also face retaliation within the military if a spouse comes forward with claims of MST. This leaves the family vulnerable. Not only are they dealing with a sexual trauma and the potential loss of one military career, but the spouse may also be targeted. This impact on their careers, either in the short or long term, could really harm the family's ability to manage financially and emotionally.

My question for the minister is as follows. What action is the government taking now to make changes at DND and VAC? Will those groups excluded from the initial report be included in the subsequent report so that we can have an accurate picture of the problem and properly address the issue of sexual misconduct in the military with those serving and with our veterans?

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for raising this important issue.

I will take this opportunity to point out the member's work on and contribution to equality and respect for human rights. All men and women who serve their country deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, no matter their sex or background.

The results of the Statistics Canada survey remind us why the chief of the defence staff made Operation Honour his first order. The data from this survey on sexual misconduct is extremely troubling, but also useful, and serves to refocus the efforts of Operation Honour. An action plan to resolve the problems outlined in the survey will be released by the chief of the defence staff later this month.

In the meantime, measures have already been implemented in response to some of the main concerns. The priority was to ensure that victims have more and different options for care and support. I am pleased to confirm that they do have more than they did a year ago. That is a significant improvement.

A number of initiatives to support victims of sexual violence are being developed to ensure that victims have access to a full range of services to help them navigate the military justice system and get the care they need to restore their well-being.

Adjournment Proceedings

A peer support network is being developed in coordination with the well-established operational stress injury support group and will be available soon.

The forces have also enhanced their engagement with sexual assault victim support groups located near bases and wings where military victims currently seek support.

The Canadian Armed Forces are also implementing new comprehensive education and training initiatives to raise awareness among members.

Given the survey results, our armed forces must do better. The survey revealed that sexual assault happens much more often than in the general population. This behaviour is harmful to all members of the armed forces.

It is important to note that the survey also revealed there are signs Operation Honour is taking hold. More than 80% of military members trust that their leaders will deal effectively with harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

To further enhance the confidence of our members, this must be backed up with results. As the chief of the defence staff said, those who choose not to follow his orders will be dealt with through disciplinary or administrative action. Harmful or inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind is absolutely unacceptable.

Given the results of this survey, I can appreciate that there are those who remain skeptical of the military's efforts. However, our government and the chief of the defence staff are committed to demonstrating that Operation Honour is different.

The cultural change that is being fostered will not happen overnight and will continue to require the full engagement of every military member.

I would like to thank the members of the Canadian Armed Forces who responded to the survey. The high response rate shows how concerned Canadian Armed Forces members are about this issue.

The Canadian Armed Forces has a lot of work ahead, but I know the current leadership is committed to getting it done.

●(1845)

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I would like to share at this point the propositions from It's Just 700, because it has the critical insights into how to begin to address military sexual trauma.

First, we need more women in the military. Like in politics, we need a critical mass of women in order to change the culture and ensure that women are heard.

Second, "A lot of people see things going on and say nothing." The best way to stop assaults and abuse is to be a witness. When we see or experience something wrong, we have to report it. That provides a statement and it provides a witness. Sadly, many people choose to say nothing because they are afraid or are worried about their own careers.

I hope the government is listening and that we can uproot the problem of military sexual trauma from our Canadian Forces so our veterans do not continue to suffer.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate that harmful or inappropriate sexual behaviour of any kind is absolutely unacceptable. The Canadian Armed Forces recognizes that it needs to do better and is working very hard to root out this problem.

Between April and December 2016, 116 individuals were subject to administrative action for incidents of sexual misconduct. In 2016, 19 people were accused of committing sexual offences and 17 of them were found guilty. In 2016, 32 people were relieved of their command, supervision, or training duties because of matters of a sexual nature.

There is still work to be done and we remain committed to fixing what is wrong within the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to get up again to speak on defence issues. Hopefully, the parliamentary secretary will be able to address the issues that I raise.

I am coming back on a question that I raised on March 9. In that question, I talked about whether the Liberals are going to cook the books in the budget with National Defence. It is a bit of a shell game, moving Coast Guard expenses as part of the defence budget so that we might get closer to that 2% aspirational target set by NATO. As we know, the Coast Guard does not do any actual National Defence work. It is strictly there in search and rescue mode and to some degree does border security.

As well, I come back to this issue of danger pay that was taken away from our troops who were on the ground in Kuwait in the fight against ISIS. As members know, on March 9 we did have our opposition day in the House, and ultimately the government supported my motion to retroactively restore danger pay to all members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are involved in Operation Impact, whether they are in Kuwait, stationed in Iraq, or stationed in other locations throughout the Middle East supporting the efforts on the ground and in the air to defeat ISIS.

The questions have come back to the government. When will the troops who had their danger pay taken away at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait have their danger pay restored? When will they have all that back pay, which goes up to about \$1,800 a month in increased salaries, in income tax treatment, and other benefits that accrue to them? When is that actually going to be paid back to them?

Adjournment Proceedings

I want the government also to commit to make sure that those benefits are not taken away from other operations in Kuwait and Iraq. As we know, from the questions on the Order Paper that we raised, there has been an ongoing assessment of the danger and hardship risks that are associated with being deployed, but we also always have to remember that this is a bigger mission, taking on ISIS. It takes members of all the Canadian Armed Forces to be on the ground and in that space dealing with ISIS terrorists.

As we know, those terrorists are very mobile. Right now they are fleeing Mosul, and as those rats scurry away, they are going to places like Kuwait. They are getting out of Iraq. They are going to Syria and other surrounding regions, including back down to Baghdad, which really does put all of our troops at risk.

We have to remember that it is not just about those members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are in harm's way. This about supporting their families at home. I hope that the parliamentary secretary can assure those families that all of our troops, whether part of the Air Task Force at Kuwait, part of our Special Operations Forces, or part of a medical mission in Iraq, are going to have all of the dollars and cents that they deserve, that every penny will be paid back, and that those people who are going to be deployed and are currently deployed will not have those benefits clawed back.

Finally, I ask this of the government and parliamentary secretary. Will the Minister of National Defence correct the record of his misleading comments that he has said in this House more than a few times now? They are completely contrary to the questions on the Order Paper that he answered in Question No. 600, when he said that all of our troops, since they were deployed in Iraq and Kuwait, have all their benefits until September 1, 2016.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for raising this adjournment debate. I know how much of a concern this is to him and to all other members of the House.

I would like to remind my hon. colleague that our government and the rest of the House unanimously supported the opposition motion on this matter on March 9. The motion we supported sought to reinstate tax relief for Canadian Armed Forces personnel deployed in Arifjan, Kuwait.

I would like to begin by reiterating what the minister and I have both said many times. Our government cares very much about our troops and has tremendous respect for the men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. They are highly trained and highly skilled and are the pride of all Canadians from coast to coast. When they are deployed overseas, they represent Canada with professionalism and courage.

Members of the House are unanimous when it comes to their support for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. Hon. members agree that CAF personnel are entitled to allowances that reflect the conditions and risks that they are exposed to. Our commitment in this regard has not changed.

The Minister of National Defence himself was deployed many times when he was a soldier. He knows how important these allowances are, not only for our brave soldiers, but also for their families back at home. The well-being of our soldiers is a top priority for our government.

I would also remind my colleague that the minister has made personal commitments regarding risk assessment. He has asked the chief of the defence staff to look at our internal procedures and make recommendations regarding any changes that should be made. He has also asked the Department of National Defence to work with the other relevant departments and agencies to review this process. This review is under way, and our government will make decisions once it is completed.

As we await the results of this review, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the methodology currently used to assign risk levels. Risk levels assigned to any operation are constantly reviewed. Risk levels accurately reflect the actual conditions and risks that personnel are exposed to in a specific geographic location and on a specific operation. These levels change over time, as do the risks and conditions associated with soldiers' duties.

It is important to note that the committee that makes these decisions consists not only of civilian staff, but also of senior military officials. These individuals have led military operations and their experience has made them acutely aware of the sacrifices constantly being made by the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

These risk levels are established based on the analyses and advice of experts such as senior military officials, doctors, and intelligence advisers. Committee members do their best to properly assess the conditions and risks associated with each deployment. While waiting for General Vance's review, we should remember that the top priority is to ensure that our men and women in uniform are always honoured and duly compensated for the work they do.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the parliamentary secretary that this is about more than just words. This is about leadership, and that is what we have not seen from the minister or the government.

We have to remember that when this happened under a Conservative government, we pushed aside the civil servants who made these decisions and we did the right thing. We made sure that danger pay and tax benefits were there for our troops when they were deployed in Afghanistan. We need that type of leadership now from the minister. Again, the minister has allowed the Prime Minister and the finance minister to cut \$12 billion from the defence budget over the last two years alone, being \$8.5 billion this year. That is not leadership.

Adjournment Proceedings

Finally, the parliamentary secretary wants to talk about methodology. This is not about methodology. This is about getting it right for our troops. They want some clear answers and some clear indication that the government is going to repay all of the danger pay that was taken away from those troops who are currently deployed in Kuwait and that this will not happen again in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate that our government cares deeply about our men and women in uniform. What is more, the government is in the process of correcting the harmful effects of the danger pay and tax relief system put in place by the Conservatives.

We are constantly working to improve the working conditions of our soldiers. Contrary to what the member said, the defence budget

has increased. The government is thus committed to ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces has the tools it needs to accomplish its security and defence missions and to work with our allies on a wide variety of operations around the world.

Today, Canada is the sixth largest contributor of the 28 NATO member countries. I would like to reassure my colleague that the parameters for determining Canada's contribution will be in keeping with the rules of NATO.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): – The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

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