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(HANSARD)

Friday, May 5, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 5, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Hon. Patty Hajdu (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism) moved:

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that, with respect to Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, this House disagrees with the amendments made by the Senate.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join this important debate and to talk about Bill C-4, and most important, I am here to ask the members of this House to oppose the amendments introduced by the Senate to Bill C-4.

The previous government's bills, Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, were intentionally designed to weaken unions and to break down the labour movement in Canada. In particular, Bill C-525 has made it more difficult for Canadian workers to unionize and gives a significant advantage to the employer. By rejecting the Senate amendments, we can restore healthy labour relations between government, employers, and unions.

Our government believes that a healthy labour relationship leads to a thriving middle class and a strong economy. In 2015, Canadians were clear in their message that they wanted a government that values fairness, transparency, and collaboration, and they were clear that they wanted a government that puts the well-being of Canadians first.

The commitments we made to Canadians included working hard to restore trust in public institutions, including Parliament, by working with greater openness and transparency, by promoting more open and free votes, and by reforming and strengthening committees.

During the campaign, we also talked about the need to grow the middle class to ensure stable lives and income for Canadians, and we

talked about the history and value of organized labour in ensuring those goals.

We committed to restoring a fair and balanced approach to labour relations, and Bill C-4 is an integral piece of doing just that.

[*Translation*]

We must restore balanced labour relations between employees and employers, and to do that, we need to support Bill C-4.

[*English*]

Our government respects and values unions and their workers, and we know that employers do too. Both employers and unions play critical roles in ensuring that workers receive decent wages and are treated fairly in safe, healthy work environments.

It is our labour laws that help ensure that there is a balance between the rights of unions and the rights of employers. Bill C-4, in its original form, is emblematic of our values and guiding principles.

Bill C-4 proposes to repeal amendments enacted by Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, which were introduced by the previous government.

[*Translation*]

I would remind the House that, as originally introduced, Bill C-4 sought to restore fairness, balance, and stability to the federal labour relations system. The purpose of Bill C-4 was to repeal amendments made by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

[*English*]

Bills C-525 and C-377 have serious ramifications for workers and unions in Canada.

Bill C-4 proposes to return to the card check certification system that was in place before the introduction of Bill C-525 and also proposes removing the public financial reporting requirements for unions introduced in Bill C-377.

Bill C-4 was already debated, and I am pleased that it was adopted in the House of Commons in its original version. At third reading here in this House, 204 members voted in favour of Bill C-4, and that means that 72% of all the members who voted in this House were in favour of the bill.

It then went to the Senate, where honourable Senators debated it, discussed it, and amended it. In the Senate, the bill was adopted with amendments, which would affect the sections of Bill C-4 related to union certification and would ultimately lead to Bill C-525 remaining in effect, which, as I mentioned, would have detrimental effects on unions and their members.

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Both of the bills addressed by Bill C-4 hinder positive employee and employer relationships, but Bill C-525 in particular has made it more difficult for Canadian workers to unionize. This is because Bill C-525 changed the union certification and decertification systems under three federal labour statutes.

[*Translation*]

The pieces of legislation addressed in Bill C-4 both impede positive employer-employee relations. Bill C-525 in particular has complicated things for Canadians who want to unionize.

[*English*]

The bill essentially made it harder for unions to be certified as collective bargaining agents and made it easier for bargaining agents to be decertified.

Prior to the amendments enacted through Bill C-525, federally regulated unions could use what was called a card check system for certification. If a union demonstrated that 50% plus 1% of workers had signed union cards, the union could be certified as the bargaining agent for those workers. A vote was only required if less than a majority, but enough to indicate a strong interest, signed: less than 35%, under the Canada Labour Code, for example. Bill C-525 changed that to require that unions show at least 40% membership support before holding a secret ballot vote and to require a vote even when more than 50% of workers signed union membership cards. It also made it easier for unions to be decertified by lowering the threshold to trigger a decertification vote to 40%, compared to majority support, which was previously required.

Unfortunately, we have seen examples of employers who will resort to any measure to deter their employees from unionizing. In effect, what Bill C-525 does is allow employers to know exactly when a union might be trying to organize in the workplace. The point is that as a result of Bill C-525, employers now have a powerful tool they did not have before to slow down or stop the union certification process. More generally, they have the ability to unfairly influence the collective bargaining process.

The card check system, whereby a union is certified by demonstrating majority support through signed union cards has been used successfully for many years in the federal jurisdiction and in several provinces. A number of unions, like Unifor and the Air Line Pilots Association, argue that it is fast, efficient, and much more likely to be free of employer interference than the mandatory secret ballot system brought in under Bill C-525.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

Other interested parties, such as the Canadian Labour Congress, opposed the introduction of a mandatory vote system as set out in Bill C-525.

[*English*]

Bill C-525 made significant changes to a system that already worked. There was a democratic and fair system in place for employees to express their support for a union. As I mentioned, a card check system relies on majority support, a key democratic principle.

Bill C-525 is not problematic for just unions. It imposes some serious burdens on others as well. For example, there are real implications for the Canada Industrial Relations Board and the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board. These boards are responsible for the full cost and logistical responsibilities involved in holding representation votes. Under these changes, the CIRB would be required to hold a vote to certify a union not just in the roughly 20% of cases where less than a majority of workers have signed union cards but in all cases, which would mean a fivefold increase in the board's workload.

Next is bill C-377. While I should note that the Senate's amendments do not affect the repeal of Bill C-377, I want to remind members of this bill so we can remember why repealing both of these bills is important.

Bill C-377 tips the scales in favour of the employer during the collective bargaining process. It requires labour organizations and labour trusts to file detailed financial and other information with the Canada Revenue Agency. This information is then made publicly available on the CRA's website. For example, during the collective bargaining process, employers will be able to know how much money the union has in its strike fund, giving the employer a substantial advantage.

Both Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 were expressly designed to disempower and weaken unions, giving significant advantage to employers. That is why our government introduced Bill C-4. It was to restore fair and balanced labour relations in our country.

Unions play a critical role in protecting the rights of Canadians and in ensuring a strong middle class. The right to organize must be protected in Canada. This government respects unions and workers and knows the critical role they play in ensuring a strong economy and a healthy society. Labour laws should ensure that there is a balance between the rights of unions and the rights of employers. How is it that Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 were passed if they do not support such a balance?

These bills were introduced and passed by the previous government because it ignored the long-standing tradition of tripartite consultation in this country. The tripartite consultation process ensures that employers, unions, and governments work together on issues of labour relations law reform and has long contributed to a stable labour relationship across the country. These relationships were not respected by the previous government. The introduction of Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 demonstrated the disdain of the previous government for the strong value of the collective voice and effort the tripartite approach represents.

Government Orders

Our government believes that for policies to be fair and balanced, they must be developed through sincere consultation and engagement with all of our partners. A fair and workable labour management balance can only be reached when all parties—the government, unions, and employers—are part of the process. Our government is strongly committed to this approach.

Successful collective bargaining and fairness in the employer-employee relationship are the foundation of our economy. They provide stability and predictability in the labour force, two vital elements of a strong economy.

When labour law reform is required in the future, our government is firmly committed to ensuring that we ground policy development in evidence and collaboration through the tripartite relationship. This approach is critical to ensure that fair, balanced, evidence-based labour policies are developed through real consultation. They are essential for the prosperity of workers and employers, Canadian society, and the economy as a whole. They protect the rights of Canadian workers, and they help the middle class grow and prosper.

By repealing the changes made by Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, our government will help restore a fair and balanced approach to labour relations in Canada.

Let us be clear. Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 have diminished and weakened Canada's labour movement, and the way the bills were passed did not allow employers or unions to play their usual role in informing government's decisions.

Even though there were some differences of opinion about the merits of the changes imposed by Bill C-525, representatives on both sides of the bargaining table were highly critical of how the previous government brought in these changes.

It was not only our government that was concerned about Bill C-525 and Bill C-377. Many stakeholders also expressed their concerns. There are ample concerns about the content of these bills and the damage they do to the labour movement and the fair and balanced relationship between employers and their employees.

As I have reminded all members, it is just as important to address how these changes came to pass. Employers and unions were not given the chance to help inform the previous government's decisions. It is no surprise that when policies are developed without proper consultation, as was the case with both of these bills, they often end up causing more harm than good.

Labour reforms are important. They have wide-ranging implications for workers, for unions, for employers, and for our country, which is why we must give the process of labour law reform the time and respect it deserves, and our government will continue to do so.

Successful collective bargaining and fairness in the employer-employee relationship are the foundation of our economy. They provide stability and predictability in the labour force, two vital elements of a strong economy. They are the basis for good wages and safe working environments, what should be basic rights for all Canadians, and they are the basis for good labour policy that affects millions of working Canadians.

The rights of labour unions and the workers they represent are also the rights of Canadians. As elected officials, we have a responsibility

to protect those rights. We need to make sure that labour policy works in the best interests of Canadians. Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 cause real harm and do not represent a positive contribution to labour relations in Canada.

We need to continue working to ensure that we uphold the tripartite consultation process between employers, unions, and governments. By working together on issues of labour relations law reform, we will continue to have strong and stable relations across the country. By opposing the Senate amendments, we can restore fair and balanced labour relations in our country, which contribute to a thriving middle class and a strong economy.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

We believe that, to ensure fairness and balance, the House must oppose the proposed amendments.

[*English*]

I ask all members to oppose the amendments introduced to Bill C-4 in the Senate and to give labour relations the respect it deserves.

• (1020)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, unions typically cite the famous Rand decision as the basis for the very favourable arrangement they have in our country through mandatory union dues. The Rand decision of January 29, 1946 on the dispute between Ford Motors and the UAW-CIO sets up the system that we have today, which leads to mandatory representation of all members in a bargaining unit that has been certified.

In that important ruling, Justice Ivan Rand said the following:

But unguarded power cannot be trusted and the maintenance of social balance demands that the use or exercise of power be subject to controls. Politically this resides in alert public opinion and the secret ballot.

The member across has used rhetoric to attack the secret ballot, which would make many third-world, tin-pot dictators proud. She has said that the secret ballot is too expensive, that it is too costly to allow workers to vote on their own destinies, that it is too much hassle for labour boards, too much work for bureaucrats to administer secret ballots, and therefore, we should go back to a simpler system that forces workers to state their position on union certification in front of all of their colleagues and their employer.

She has further said that it is easier to unionize a workplace when there is no secret ballot. Surely, it is easier for a government to take power when it does not have to be subjected to a secret ballot. I am sure that there are many dictators around the world who would make the very same argument as to why there should be no vote on the powers they command in their respective jurisdictions.

Government Orders

Therefore, if the hon. member is of the view that a secret ballot is too costly, too much work, and too distracting, is she suggesting also that governments and Parliaments in Canada could be elected without a secret ballot?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. member is comparing apples and oranges. In fact, the secret ballot is triggered if less than 50% of the employees choose not to sign the card, and if under 35%, the request to unionize is rejected by the board. I think the member knows that.

The challenge is that when a secret ballot is used, the employer has a head start, if you will, and the employer has applied undue pressure—

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: This is unbelievable. They're all just laughing at your point.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the member for Carleton that he had the opportunity to ask the question. No one interrupted him. I would appreciate it if he would not interrupt the minister.

The hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, the employer in that case has a head start to apply undue pressure on employees. The evidence shows that this happens. In fact, we know this based on complaints to the board. The board receives far more complaints on behalf of employees who have felt undue pressure by their employers than the other way around.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I have said in the House on previous occasions, Bill C-4 was a very good first step.

As some members will remember, the previous government's omnibus Bill C-4 did a number of things, including decimating the health and safety for public sector workers. There is more than this; we need to restore important safeguards for workers, including safety safeguards which were repealed in the omnibus bill of the previous government.

Today is a good first step. I would like to hear from the minister when we are going to see the repeal. You commented in your speech about the importance of safety. There are still things in legislation that need to be repealed. Today is a very good first step. We need to move on and start to get back to good labour relations and safer workplaces.

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that she should address the question to the Chair and not to the minister directly.

The hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right that there is more to be done, but this was an important first step, as she has acknowledged. It sets the tone for restoring the tripartite relationship that is so important to this country.

It has been my pleasure in my new role, I guess it is not so new anymore, to meet with employer and labour groups, and to work very closely with both groups. I have been hearing from both of

them regarding the kind of restoration that is required. We are working diligently to make sure we have a plan to introduce legislation that will continue to strengthen the labour movement, make businesses prosper, and grow our economy together.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, at one point during the minister's speech on the issue of the amendments to the Senate, I actually closed my eyes and thought I was in the Ontario legislature, listening to Kathleen Wynne speak about her relationship with the labour movement. It should be no surprise to anyone, because the same playbook that was used in Ontario is now being used federally to pander to the union movement. As an ex-union president, I can say that the issue of the secret ballot is a major concern among members of the labour movement, not necessarily the leadership.

The Senate sees the flaws in Bill C-4 with respect to the union certification. It has made this amendment, because the fundamental tenet of democracy that exists, not only in this country but in other democratic countries around the world, is the secret ballot. Why do the minister and the government have such contempt for a majority in the Senate who saw the flaw in this bill and want to reverse its decision?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, I noticed the member used the phrase "pander to the union movement". I would like to point out that this phrase demonstrates his attitude, and perhaps his party's attitude, to workers in Canada. In fact, the union movement is about —

Mr. John Brassard: I was one of them. I know exactly what you're doing.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that after they ask their questions, please pay the same respect that they received when they were asking their questions.

The hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, the union movement in fact is representative of Canadian employees. We are talking about people who work in Canada, people who deserve to work in fair, well-compensated, safe spaces. The union movement is critical to ensuring that happens in our country, that people have employment that is decent, safe, and that at the end of the day, they are contributing to our economy and growing the middle class.

We reject the allegation that we are pandering to the union movement. We are restoring a tripartite relationship and responding to what we have heard across the country. It is a commitment that we have made, and we intend to keep it.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will provide some context for new members here today as to what motivated the member for Wetaskiwin's private member's bill. He said in the House that it was to address the mountain of grievances against big union bosses, "the mountain of grievances". I spoke with the chair of the Canada Industrial Relations Board, and there have been two grievances in the past 10 years. This was the solution for a problem that did not exist. I would ask for the minister's comments.

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Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Speaker, clearly, I agree. My colleague is referring to the evidence, and that is in fact what we have committed as a government: to use evidence to make good policy that will benefit Canadians, grow our middle class, and create a strong economy. When we move away from using evidence, it results in flawed legislation that often has an ulterior motive. From my perspective, that is what Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 represented.

• (1030)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise in defence of the secret ballot, a cherished tenet of democracy. I begin again, as I did earlier, by quoting the ruling by Justice Ivan Rand in the matter of Ford Motors versus the United Auto Workers–CIO of 1946.

Before I quote this passage, let me explain its importance.

The ruling of Justice Ivan Rand in 1946, in this dispute, has created the framework for our entire union certification and subsequent union financing policy right across the country, in all 10 provinces and in the federal jurisdiction. The resolution to which Mr. Justice Rand arrived was that all members of the bargaining unit at Ford Motors would be required to pay union dues, and the union would be required thereafter to provide representation to all of those workers. That union would sign collective agreements and would represent those workers in grievances. However, for the union to control that bargaining unit and act as its agent, it would have to secure majority support from the workers in the union. How one determines whether a union has the support of the majority of workers in the bargaining unit is what we are debating here today.

There are two options. One is a process called “card check”, where those who want to certify or take over a workplace go around with a petition and ask workers on the floor to sign that petition. When they have enough signatures to reach 50% plus one, they then go to the Labour Relations Board and say, “We have a majority. Please give us exclusive representational powers over the entire unit.” The other option is that once those signatures are collected, the board says, “You are now authorized to hold a secret ballot vote.” That is so that the will and volition of the members of that unit can express themselves, free of intimidation from either the employer or the aspiring union. The workers go into a secret voting box, mark their X, yea or nay, and if the union receives 50% plus one, it becomes the bargaining agent for the bargaining unit.

Now I will get back to Justice Ivan Rand. Among the very first pages in his ruling, he wrote:

But unguarded power cannot be trusted and the maintenance of social balance demands that the use or exercise of power be subject to controls. Politically this resides in alert public opinion and the secret ballot.

Why do we need a secret ballot? Why can we not simply collect public signatures and have those signatures trigger representation? The answer, of course, is that the only way for persons to truly exercise their will is to do so in the privacy of a walled-in voting booth where they select a yes or a no, without anybody finding out what they chose. To deny them of that opportunity means they could face potential consequences from people on either side of the question at stake. The result is that, out in the open where people are forced to put their names on a public list rather than exercising their

will in private, they could experience bullying by the union, or the employer, for that matter.

• (1035)

We heard arguments today from the minister that holding a secret ballot is too costly, too time-consuming, and too difficult for those trying to unionize a workplace. Let us address each one of those objections.

She said it was too costly. She pointed out that under the current law in Canada, in a federally regulated workplace, an aspiring union not only has to collect signatures to trigger a vote, but then has to campaign to win that vote, that ballot boxes have to be arranged so that the vote can be administered, and then, of course, that workers within the bargaining unit have to take the time out of their day to mark an X next to their preferred option.

All of those things are true. They are true in the workplace and they are true in a general election to select this Parliament. It is true that it takes time to hold a general election. In fact, we shut down this entire Parliament for 36 days; 36 days while no bills are passed, no debates are held, no government announcements are made, almost no government business at the executive level is conducted. Why? Everybody is too busy devoting their time to this gigantic distraction, this gigantic enterprise that the Liberal Party condemns in the case of workplaces as democracy.

Is democracy time-consuming? Of course it is, but when we compare democratic nations to non-democratic nations, we find the return on the investment of that time to be spectacularly worth it.

Now, we know voting costs money. I think the last election cost something like a quarter of a billion dollars. Ballot boxes had to be purchased. Ballots had to be printed. Returning officers had to be hired. Halls for voting had to be rented. All of these things cost money. If the government's view is that we cannot spare any expense to administer democracy, that would be akin to arguing that we cannot afford elections in Canada. We know the Liberals tried to change the entire voting system to favour themselves without consulting the Canadian people through a referendum. In itself that action illustrated their hostility to the practice and institution of voting. Could it be that same contempt has spilled over into Canada's federally regulated workplaces?

Does democracy cost money? Yes, it costs money, and it is worth every single penny expended. It is worth it, because it is the only way to truly evaluate the will of those over whom a decision must be made.

Speaking of money, what is the decision that is being made when we certify a union in a workplace? We certify that union's ability to uphold taxation power over all of the workers in that workplace.

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In Canada, people who work in a unionized bargaining unit must pay union dues, even if they choose not to be a member of the union, even if they object to the way in which that money is spent. Workers are not allowed to opt out of it. We are one of the very few countries in the free and democratic world that has this rule. Increasingly across Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, workers are given the ability to opt out of union dues, because those countries have freedom of association in the workplace. Here in Canada, in all 10 provinces and in the federal jurisdiction, a unionized workplace empowers the bargaining agent to forcefully collect dues against the wishes of many of its members.

● (1040)

The trade-off is that in this system, an exclusive majority representation, we must have at least a majority in order to enjoy that spectacular and unmatched privilege of collecting mandatory dues from people within that sphere. Remember that no other advocacy group in all of Canada enjoys these privileges. Even those groups that advocate to the benefit of other people do not have that power. Some say, "Look, unions are fighting for the rights of the workers; therefore, those workers should pay for the value of that advocacy, lest we have free riders."

The Canadian Cancer Society is fighting for cancer patients, but we do not collect mandatory union dues from cancer patients in order to fund the Canadian Cancer Society. People contribute to it through voluntary donations. I make this point not even to argue against mandatory union dues, but merely to point out the extraordinary privilege that our unions enjoy once they have certified a workplace. The least that we can entitle our workers to have is the right to vote on whether that privilege should be extended at their expense.

If the government is so worried about saving money by avoiding the enormous cost of holding a vote, is it not at all worried about the subsequent cost that certification imposes upon the workers who must pay for it? Of course, at the risk of being repetitious, I say that if the government believes voting is too expensive in our workplaces, why would Liberals not simply argue that voting is too expensive in our democracy? In fact, I am sure, if we look through the encyclopedia of tin-pot dictators, many have made exactly the same arguments that the government makes today to avoid facing electorates in their own countries.

Finally, they say a secret ballot makes things too difficult for the unions. If there were no secret ballots, then they would succeed at certifying more workplaces, more easily. In fact, when the minister's predecessor pulled a document out of my former department when I was minister of employment and social development, she said, "Aha, when there are secret ballots, there's a lower rate of union certification. Gotcha. Now we've found out what your agenda is." It was the silver bullet. It was the smoking gun. "We have just proved that when workers are given the opportunity to vote, they make decisions that we don't like, and now we have proof of it, and because they make decisions we don't like, we are going to take away their power to make that decision in the first place."

That is their idea of democracy. If people vote in a way that the Liberals and special interest groups which back them do not like, they will take away the right to vote altogether as an unnecessary

costly and burdensome inconvenience. Democracy is not an inconvenience. It is the basis of our entire country.

Finally, the Liberals said that allowing a secret ballot would permit employers to exert undue pressure on workers. A secret ballot is secret. The employer does not find out which way the worker voted. Only under the regime that the government is trying to reinstate would the employer even know what an employee does with the certification decision. We on this side of the House are trying to free the worker from intimidation and undue influence by both sides in a certification dispute.

We see these four arguments: secret ballot voting is too costly, that it is too distracting, that it gives employers the ability to influence the outcome, and finally, that it makes it too difficult for a union to certify.

● (1045)

I guess the government could argue that the secret ballot is very dangerous in the election of Parliament because it might make it too difficult for Liberals to get elected in future votes. Right? It would just be too difficult. Therefore, let us find a simpler system that gives the Liberals the outcome they want. Of course, this is not about workers, unions, improving workplace dynamics, or rebalancing the scales. This is about taking power away from workers to give it to the powerful interest groups that helped elect the Liberal government.

We on this side continue to stand for the right of workers to vote to determine their own destiny, rather than having it imposed upon them by either the current government or any of the interest groups that elected it.

Therefore, I move, "That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word 'that' and substituting the following: the amendments made by the Senate to C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act be now read a second time and concurred in."

I am thankful for the opportunity to make this motion. I will submit it to the dais, and I will give all members of the House the opportunity to reaffirm the Canadian commitment to democracy and one of its central pillars, the right of every man and every woman to carry out his or her franchise in secret, free from pressure and undue intimidation, and that we highly resolve that this democratic principle will exist across the land and in our workplaces.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the member for Carleton for the amendment. The Chair will take it under advisement and get back to the House shortly.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the interventions by my friend and colleague from Carleton, as misdirected as they may be.

Government Orders

I first have to recognize the fact that he made no comment whatsoever about Bill C-377. Therefore, I am thinking the Conservatives now understand the folly in that bill and the error of their ways.

With respect to a secret ballot being the perfect solution, and tin-pot dictators would like the card check, the secret ballot has not really worked out exceptionally well for the people of Russia or Iran, if we want to hold those up as great democracies in the world.

The member did make reference to a document that was presented by his department. That document did show that the field is tilted toward employers. That was the information in that document. However, the most egregious part of that whole scenario is the fact that, as we were debating Bill C-525 in the House, the minister at the time, and it was not the member for Carleton but the member for Simcoe—Grey, had that information. She sat on that information and did not allow it to be entered into the debate. I ask why the minister would sit on that information, not allow for a thorough debate, and not bring what knowledge and data into the debate that could be brought.

• (1050)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, to address the member's first point about Bill C-377, union financial transparency, I did not mention it in my speech because it is not at stake. That matter passed through the House of Commons and the Senate did not amend it. What is at stake here is the secret ballot. That is the only thing we are debating: whether workers should have a secret ballot vote to determine if they certify a workplace.

The member once again has said that his party obtained a document after taking power that shows that the previous Conservative government was aware that union certifications occur at lower rates when there are secret ballots than when there are card checks. The only thing this proves is that when workers are given the choice—without intimidation, without prying eyes looking over their shoulder—they decide not to certify at the same levels as the member would hope.

That is like saying that a study just came out showing that if Liberals had been allowed to go around with card checks over the last century and half and elect themselves government, they would have had more success in dominating the Canadian electoral landscape than they in fact had, and therefore it would have been much easier for the Liberal Party to take power over those years if the country had simply done away with the secret ballot.

Democracy exists even when the voters choose an outcome that the authorities are not happy with.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, my comment to the hon. member on the analogy of elections and secret ballots in the workplace is that the analogy does not hold up. It holds up for the Conservatives when they want to talk about being the champions of democracy, but it is not the analogy that fits in the workplace. It would, if workers were choosing between one union or another.

The real point I want to make is that the member does not seem to understand how secret ballots take place in a workplace. It is not the way he thinks it happens. They do not just fall out of the sky and

everyone knows a secret ballot is going to happen. The problem with the secret ballot is that it gives notice within a workplace, and what we know from evidence and what we have in heard in committee is that once notice is given, employers intimidate employees. That is the issue.

The card check system just allows employees to choose to be represented. It does not change the workplace. It is simply a choice in representation. How in the world can that be undemocratic?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member says that a secret ballot vote allows an employer to intimidate the employee. The problem with that argument is that a secret ballot is secret, right? Therefore, the employer does not know how an individual worker has actually voted. Thus, it is impossible to carry out intimidation or punish someone for his or her vote. In the same way, in a general election a government cannot punish an individual voter for casting his or her ballot in a certain way because the government does not know how that individual voted.

If the member wants to get rid of workplace intimidation in the certification process, then she should rise and stand up for the basic principle—in fact, the basic mechanism—of democracy, which is the secret ballot.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard this issue debated over many hours. When we sat in opposition with New Democrats and the Green Party, we told the Conservative government then that its approach to labour was wrong. Today's Prime Minister said at that time that what the Conservatives were doing was wrong.

Canadians understand what this government is doing. We are trying to restore harmony within the labour movement and management, and Bill C-4 would go a long way in achieving that. Bill C-4 is a priority for this government.

As the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour has said, over 200 members of the House of Commons voted in favour of this legislation. Now the Senate has disagreed with the House. Given the many hours that we have debated this issue and given the fact that Canadians, using democracy, voted in support of this government's approach to labour issues, why does that member believe that we have to deal with this issue again today, when the bill has been so overwhelmingly accepted by Canadians and by the House of Commons?

An. hon. member: Because you're wrong, and the Senate told us.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I recognize the member, I want to remind the members of the opposition that should they wish to ask questions, they should get up instead of heckling or shouting.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, if he thinks that one or two sessions of debate is long enough to dispense with the basic mechanism of democracy known as the secret ballot, he is sadly wrong.

Statements by Members

For as long as this government or any other tries to rob Canada's workers of their right to vote on their own workplace destiny, as long as they take that approach, we on this side of the House will fight back. We will be the champions of workers. If necessary, we will be the only party prepared to stand up for the rights of workers to chart their own course and mark their own destiny through the use of the ancient principle, the ancient democratic right, of a secret ballot vote.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): How about that, Madam Speaker? The Conservative Party is back with its latest attack on unions. It has been a while since we have heard that kind of thing, and it is kind of ironic to hear Conservatives posing as champions of working people. I doubt any of them have ever been part of a union organizing drive in a factory or a company.

We know that a secret ballot reduces the likelihood of success significantly and makes it much easier for employers to make threats and promises. Membership cards are the fairest, most effective way to organize workers so they can stand up for their rights and improve their working conditions.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I did not hear a question there. My colleague simply said that it was easier for him and his friends to control workplaces without secret ballot voting.

Obviously, it would be easier for him and his friends to control workers by taking away their right to vote. However, we are not here to help the hon. member control workplaces. We are here to protect the rights of workers.

If ours is the only party that is willing to stand up for this democratic principle, I will be proud to take on that role. However, we will never give up our efforts to stand up for democracy in every workplace in Canada.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CANADA

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's very first scientific agency, the Geological Survey of Canada celebrated its 175th anniversary on April 14, 2017.

In 1842, 25 years before Confederation, its founder and first director, William Logan, began by assessing our mineral wealth, our very first natural capital indicator. Travelling by horse, by foot, by canoe, mostly through uncharted wilderness, its early scientists described and recorded Canada's geology, geography, resources, inhabitants, and wildlife. They were, in effect, the government's official explorers. Their pioneering work in the 19th century laid the foundation for the development of Canada's mineral and energy resources.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the GSC's national geological and resource maps, publications, and scientific studies provided significant stimulus for our expansion and our growth.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Geological Survey of Canada on 175 years of groundbreaking, outstanding service, and wish them every success in their future projects.

* * *

● (1100)

MIDWIVES

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize International Day of the Midwife.

Celebrated on May 5 of each year since 1992, International Day of the Midwife recognizes the hard work and care of midwives across the world. The theme for 2017, "Midwives, Mothers and Families: Partners for Life", captures the important work and contributions midwives provide to maternal and newborn health.

I would like to recognize Countryside Midwifery Services, Grand Valley Midwives, and Stratford Midwives for all they do for mothers, newborns, and families in Perth—Wellington. Their dedication and compassion are appreciated by families throughout our communities, my family included.

My wife Justine and I will be forever grateful and thankful to midwives Evelyn Kobayashi and Caitlin Keelan on the birth of our children in 2014 and 2016.

On this International Day of the Midwife, we thank them for all they do.

* * *

WORLD MASTERS GAMES

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Canadian Herons, Canada's national badminton team for seniors aged 65-plus, who won the gold and bronze medals in badminton at the World Masters Games in New Zealand this year.

I would like to specifically congratulate team member Cora Cuyegkeng, a constituent in my riding, whom I was honoured to meet and present a Canadian flag to, before her team left for New Zealand.

As Canadians, we are proud to compete internationally and showcase the athletic abilities of our citizens, both young and young at heart. This team of senior athletes demonstrates both the will to persevere and the important commitment to staying active. They are an inspiration for all Canadians.

With the warmer weather on the horizon, we hope, I would like to encourage all Canadians from coast to coast to coast to head outdoors and to remember that it is never too late to start being active.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, societies work best when everyone contributes. When individuals and companies pay their fair share of taxes, we can pool our resources and pay for public services, including things like education, health care, roads, and support for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Unfortunately, tax evasion and the use of tax havens undermine the entire system. Some large corporations and millionaires like to hide their money in tax havens, and then laugh at the rest of us. Meanwhile, we, here, do not find that funny. We are losing out on at least \$7 billion a year.

With all that lost revenue, we could be paying tuition for every university student in this country. We could hire 34,000 family physicians, or we could fill 50 million potholes. In Montreal, that would make a huge difference.

We in the NDP know which side we are on.

When are the Liberals going to take this scandal seriously and challenge the agreements we have with tax havens like Barbados and the Cayman Islands, which are costing us a fortune?

* * *

[English]

SPRING ACTIVITIES IN P.E.I.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the spring lobster fishery is now under way in much of Atlantic Canada.

This past Friday, before the opening of Lobster Fishing Area 24, I had the opportunity to visit all of the ports in my riding and speak with many local fishers. By itself, the lobster fishery is a major component of the island economy. It also plays an essential role in supporting hundreds of much-needed rural jobs.

This period of time also marks the beginning of spring planting in the agricultural sector on P.E.I. Fishing and farming remain the strongest parts of the island economy, with the largest job creation relating to the processing of agrifood and seafood products.

I want to acknowledge the important role of Prince Edward Island's farmers, fishers, and plant workers, and I hope that they have a safe and productive 2017 season.

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● (1105)

VESAK

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to invite you and all hon. colleagues to Vesak on Parliament Hill. This is an event being held on May 10, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building.

Vesak Day is the day Buddhists remember the birth, the enlightenment, and the passing away of the Buddha.

I look forward to meeting with the ambassadors of Thailand, Nepal, Myanmar, and others in this year's wonderful celebration. We

will have occasion not only to learn more about Buddhism, but to celebrate the enormous contribution so many Buddhist Canadians have made to our country.

I would like to thank Vesak in Ottawa, an organization that is co-hosting this event, and invite all members to come to join with it in celebrating this wonderful occasion.

* * *

TELUS CUP

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an immense pleasure to stand today to congratulate the Cape Breton West Islanders on the team's TELUS Cup victory, emblematic of Canadian midget hockey supremacy.

After four decades of this national competition, this marks the first time a team from Atlantic Canada has won the title.

The gold medal game saw the Islanders enter the third period down two goals against its Quebec rival, but its trademark hard work and perseverance saw the team scratch back and bring the game to overtime.

Upper Pomquet's Logan Chisholm buried his second goal of the game to clinch the win. Stand-out goaltender Colten Ellis of River Denys was sensational, stopping 43 shots for the win. Head coach Kyle MacDonald heralded the team leadership and lauded team captain and tournament MVP Jacob Hudson for his effort.

NHL Hall of Famer Al MacInnis tweeted his pride and congratulations. Islander alumnus Andrew MacDonald of the Philadelphia Flyers bought the boys a victory supper. To president Brian MacInnis, Paul MacIsaac, Craig MacInnis, Len Tobey, Darren, Lloyd, Tammy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Fredericton.

* * *

WENDY ROBBINS

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada lost a dedicated and passionate advocate for gender equality, Wendy Robbins, who passed away on April 18 at the age of 68.

Wendy was the first woman to be promoted to full professor of English at the University of New Brunswick, and co-founded its gender and women's studies department. She defended reproductive rights in New Brunswick and helped shape national policy on the issue for the Liberal Party.

[Translation]

Wendy developed many courses on women's writing and won the Allan P. Stuart award for excellence in teaching.

She co-founded an online feminist discussion group and served as vice-president of women's and equity issues for the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. She is remembered by her friends for her energy and enthusiasm.

[English]

Her daughter, Chimène, best sums up her contributions:

Statements by Members

...she was just...the most loving and devoted grandma to her five grandkids that you can possibly imagine. For the public, all of the other amazing things she has done is what she will and should be remembered for, but in our family, Grandma Wendy is a role that she just relished.

* * *

COMEAU CASE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, our Supreme Court ruled that it would hear the Comeau case.

While this case involves the importation of alcohol across a provincial border, the ramifications are much greater. Section 121 of the Constitution Act is clear:

All Articles of the Growth, Produce, or Manufacture of any one of the Provinces shall, from and after the Union, be admitted free into each of the other Provinces.

Should our Supreme Court support a restored interpretation of Section 121, we may very well see true free trade in Canada. What a wonderful thing it would be instead of more interprovincial protectionism.

I am hopeful the Liberal government will act as an intervenor and stand behind true Canadian free trade and oppose the status quo of provincial protectionism.

I thank Mr. Gérard Comeau, his team, and the Canadian Constitution Foundation for having the determination to continue pushing this important case forward. I stand for true free trade in Canada. That means—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

* * *

FIREFIGHTERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we enter the peak fire season, I would like to recognize firefighters and first responders in my riding of New Brunswick Southwest.

My riding shares five border crossings with the state of Maine, where fire departments and first responders have a mutual aid agreement to share personnel and equipment in the event of a major fire on either side of the border, meaning that firefighters and first responders from both the U.S. and Canada will respond and border guards will allow the emergency vehicles to quickly enter the respective country.

It is worth remembering that the United States and Canada truly enjoy a unique friendship, and that extends to the support we provide one another during times of fire and emergency.

I thank all the first responders and firefighters.

* * *

• (1110)

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we celebrate 150 years of Confederation, we are also celebrating the 50th anniversary of some of the events that marked our country's centenary in 1967.

The highlight of that year for many people was Expo 67. Although I was only six at the time, it remains a very personal and a very proud memory for me. The reason is that my father and his partners were the chief architects of Canada's Pavilion at the world's fair.

Katimavik, the iconic inverted floating pyramid, was more than just a majestic architectural symbol for the country; it also housed some other meanings.

Almost as remarkable as the design is the fact that my father and his six partners were all immigrants to Canada, all in their mid-thirties, and all foreign trained, yet got this commission.

The promise our country offered, the opportunities these people were given to contribute to this nation are what many of us we will celebrate when we celebrate Canada and its 150 years

Whether it is Expo, the centenary or Canada 150, when we celebrate Canada, we ought to keep in mind that what we celebrate are the people and the opportunities we give to each other, even the immigrants.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN MILITARY TRADITION

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, allow me to educate members on the Liberal benches on Canadian military tradition.

During World War II, the Régiment de la Chaudière, like every other Canadian army unit, gave its all to achieve the targeted objectives with whatever resources they were given.

These soldiers fought on the most difficult terrain. On D-day, they made significant inroads. They attacked the Germans in the battle of the bocage, taking Caen and Falaise and liberating the ports of the Scheldt. They did what was asked of them without batting an eye.

Having spent time with some of these heroes I can tell you that they would never take credit for the accomplishments of their fellow soldiers. They would never publicly brag about their accomplishments.

The minister sullied this tradition when he took credit for the success of Operation Medusa and needs to step down.

* * *

FLOODING IN THE OUTAOUAIS

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues from the Outaouais, it is with emotion, concern, and consternation that we are watching the flooding in Gatineau and the Outaouais region, in both Quebec and Ontario. We stand in solidarity with our constituents who are caught up in this disaster.

I would like to personally thank Mayor Pedneaud-Jobin and the councillors, authorities, and municipal employees throughout the region for their support and hard work. I especially want to thank the volunteers, baseball teams, people in the neighbourhood, and first responders who are watching over our constituents day and night.

I am reassured by the fact that the Ministers of Public Safety and National Defence are closely monitoring the situation and that they will respond to any request from the pertinent authorities.

These situations are very emotional for members. My thoughts are with the residents affected by the flooding.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, in the election, the government promised to defend the environment by restoring environmental laws and processes eviscerated by Stephen Harper, yet now in office, the Liberals just repeat that tiresome Conservative refrain, “We are balancing the environment with economic development.”

Despite endless consultations, the Liberals have not enacted a single new strengthened environmental measure, but they have had no reluctance expediting major resource project approvals, relying on Stephen Harper's emasculated assessment process.

No action has been taken yet to restore protections to the Fisheries Act. The Liberal majority transport committee has recommended against restoring the Navigable Rivers Protection Act. Canadians are again being forced to sue the government for protection of threatened species.

We are growing weary counting election promises broken. What ever happened to that heartfelt pledge to protect the environment?

* * *

LIBERATION DAY

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, in spite of so much rain in this our 150th commemoration of Confederation, we can see hundreds of thousands of bright, blooming tulips throughout Ottawa.

While the tulips are beautiful, we must remember that they commemorate important events in our shared history with the Netherlands.

Today, May 5, is Dutch Liberation Day, this being the 72nd anniversary. On May 5, 1945, the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands finally ended. Courageous Canadian troops pushed the Nazis back into Germany in the later months of the war, liberating the Dutch people from five years of tyranny.

Terrorized by bombings and starving, the Dutch people were overjoyed. The Canadians were welcomed with truly open arms. It forged a bond between our two nations that has endured ever since, and will for generations to come.

Many Dutch Canadians in Flamborough—Glanbrook lived this experience first-hand. They have passed on the memories and stories of heroism to their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

I am proud of this history. I am proud that the Dutch Royal Family was provided safe refuge here during the war. I am especially proud that Canadian flags are flown throughout the Netherlands each May 5 on Liberation Day.

Oral Questions

• (1115)

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, most electricity is transmitted throughout the world thanks to the innovations of a remarkable man named Nikola Tesla.

In 1898, a group of Hamilton businessmen consulted with the young genius to build a generating station 35 miles away at DeCew Falls, which brought power to the city and was the second-longest transmission in the world at that time. That generator, which is still in use, provided Hamilton with cheap, abundant electricity and helped make us a manufacturing centre.

Last July, in his honour, an important roadway in my riding was named “Nikola Tesla Boulevard”. The local Serbian community, led by Vic Djurdjevic, started the Nikola Tesla Educational Corporation and raised over a quarter of a million dollars to support the project, pay for the new signage, and create scholarships for young scientists in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions.

I ask all members of the House to join my community in paying tribute to a remarkable man whose work has benefited the entire world, Nikola Tesla.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all know that the defence minister misled Canadians by claiming at least twice that he was the architect of Operation Medusa. In doing so, he has lost all credibility, and he needs to step down. However, the Prime Minister has a responsibility as well. The Prime Minister needs to stand up for our military and put their interests first, ahead of protecting the Minister of National Defence.

Does the Prime Minister realize that by not moving his defence minister out he is condoning his actions and sending a very troubling message to our men and women in uniform?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister has the highest regard for the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their service. He is now delivering on the broad mandate that he was given. He will soon unveil a new defence policy that will ensure that the military has the appropriate equipment and everything it needs on its missions to uphold Canada's sovereignty, to defend North America with NORAD, and to fulfill our international obligations to keep peace in the world.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, Operation Medusa is just one example of the minister making false claims. There are reports that Canadian troops who are currently serving in the Sinai desert will see cuts to their danger pay starting next month. This is another example of a broken promise. The Minister of National Defence not only misleading Canadians, but misleading the very troops he is commanding.

Can the minister not see that making false promises and false claims is actually causing hardship for our men and women in uniform?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we will make sure that our troops have all the necessary benefits to carry out their duties. They will be paid retroactively. It is our government that dealt with the immediate inequity for the soldiers who lost their tax-free status in operation Impact. Our government is working hard to review the compensation rules and find a long-term solution to fix the mess we inherited and to ensure a fair and equitable process for all.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is not very believable. In fact the defence minister cannot seem to tell the truth, even with the most basic of facts.

This week there was a fundraiser for veterans. The Minister of National Defence was supposed to be there, but he said all of a sudden he could not go. Why? Lo and behold, suddenly he had a speech he had to write. He had a speech he had to write the same night as this event which he had known about for months. No one is buying that.

He was not the architect of Operation Medusa, and he was not writing a speech on Tuesday night. He has lost all credibility. When will he step aside?

• (1120)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure for the Minister of Veteran Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence to participate at the party Under the Stars, held this week on Tuesday. It was an opportunity to exchange with our veterans and our first responders, to provide them the support they need, and to ensure we honour them and recognize their sacrifices.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has lost all credibility by taking credit for someone else's achievements. We still do not know why he did that. He never said.

Since then, he has been trying to go about his business as though nothing happened, but something has changed. Our men and women in uniform are ashamed of the Minister of National Defence. He is also doing a dishonour to veterans.

The person responsible for our troops cannot alter the truth whenever he feels like it. Will he resign?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Defence is a former reservist. He will always honour the service of our Canadian Armed Forces members, the ones with whom he served on his missions and those who served under other commanders or at other times.

Today, the minister and the government are responsible for making sure that our Canadian Armed Forces have all the equipment they need to successfully carry out their missions and all the support they need to ensure their well-being.

We conducted an extremely thorough defence policy review in which all members of Parliament had an opportunity to take part.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, taking credit for the feats of other brave Canadians is the straw that broke the camel's back. The minister has lost the support of our men and women in uniform and our veterans. No one supports him.

It is sad to see the Minister of National Defence clinging on to his position like a drowning man clinging to a life preserver.

When you make a mistake, apologizing is not enough; the honourable thing to do is take appropriate action. Here, the only appropriate action is to step down. Will he step down, yes or no?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is too bad that the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles did not attend last night's gala to commemorate the Battle of the Atlantic, because the minister received a very warm welcome. Even officer cadets wanted to meet him, have their picture taken with him, and hear what he had to say. The veterans and sailors who were there showed their support, and I saw this first-hand. The warm welcome he received demonstrates that his credibility remains intact with the Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, contrary to what it promised, the Liberal government crammed a whole bunch of other stuff into its budget bill, and that makes it an omnibus bill. Among other things, the government is attacking the parliamentary budget officer by limiting his independence and his ability to launch investigations while in office. The government is also preventing all MPs from calling for investigations and studies into issues that it finds inconvenient. Curiously, it is directing the PBO to submit a plan to the Speakers of the House of Commons and the Senate.

I have one simple question: what happens if they say no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to making the parliamentary budget officer more independent, which is what the bill recently introduced in the House of Commons sets out to do.

Oral Questions

As I pointed out yesterday, we made it very clear that we are open to amendments. We are eager to get this bill to committee so it can be examined in detail and so the committee can discuss the good ideas we put forward about changes affecting the parliamentary budget officer.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, Liberals pretend they want to ban omnibus bills but refuse to break up their omnibus budget bill. That is called hypocrisy. The Liberal omnibus budget bill would change almost 30 different laws, including restricting the PBO's mandate that Liberals once said needed to be a truly independent watchdog.

Either the Liberals only pretended to care about transparency to get elected or they abandoned their principles once they did. Which is it?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House to respond to that question directly, because when it comes to omnibus legislation, we are the ones proposing the Speaker be able to separate omnibus legislation if there are concerns.

When it comes to all measures in the budget implementation act, they are directly from the budget 2017 presented in the past in this place. When it comes to the independence of the parliamentary budget officer, we support independence. That is why we are saying, let us get the bill passed at second reading and send it to committee so it can do the work.

* * *

● (1125)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, there was no answer.

Another Trojan Horse in the Liberal omnibus budget is the infrastructure bank, which aims to privatize infrastructure and services. Internal documents reveal that representatives from private corporations helped the Liberals set up this billion-dollar privatization bank. Liberals spent months working with private sector advisers preparing for a closed-door meeting at Toronto's Shangri-La Hotel, of course.

Can the Liberal minister define “conflict of interest”?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the bank is designed to help attract private capital, where it makes sense, to new projects so that we can build more transformational infrastructure across Canada.

The infrastructure bank, let us be clear, is only \$15 billion out of more than a \$180-billion transformational plan. The infrastructure bank would be an optional tool for our partners to use, should they wish to do so. No municipality, province, or territory would be forced to use the bank, nor would they be punished for not doing so.

This government takes counsel; it does not take orders.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is funny to hear the parliamentary secretary say “only \$15 billion”.

In their omnibus budget bill, the Liberals are creating the infrastructure bank and today we learn who is pulling the strings of this huge taxpayer trap.

BlackRock is the biggest investor in the world. BlackRock helped the Liberal government create the infrastructure bank. BlackRock assisted the Liberal government with its public relations. BlackRock will be a client of the infrastructure bank and will make huge profits from it.

Is the bank being established for the sake of our communities or for the people with club privilege? Who is running this government, BlackRock?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the bank is designed to help attract private capital to new projects so that we can build more transformational infrastructure across Canada.

The infrastructure bank, it bears repeating, is only \$15 billion out of more than a \$180-billion transformational plan. The infrastructure bank will be yet another tool for our partners to use, should they wish to do so.

No municipality, province, or territory will be forced to use the bank. It is one of the tools in our toolkit to create good jobs for the 21st century.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, last night the Prime Minister kicked his cash-for-access fundraising scheme back into high gear. However, just three nights ago, the Minister of National Defence bailed at the last minute, and for no good reason, on a high-profile fundraiser for Afghanistan vets.

The Liberals are showing where their priorities are, and it is not with our military or our veterans. Why does the Liberal government make time for people with big cheques for the Liberal Party but cannot find time to attend fundraisers for our vets and troops?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, improving this country's democracy means ensuring that political parties raise funds from the public in a more open and transparent manner. That is why we are taking action. Canadians have a right to know even more than they do now. Political parties and leadership campaigns will be required to promptly and publicly disclose fundraising event information.

Oral Questions

We will continue to take action to make government and all aspects of our democracy more open and transparent. I encourage all parties in this place to do what they can for openness and transparency.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, my riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is home to CFB Suffield. I was elected to stand up for all constituents, including those military personnel and civilian staff who bravely serve our country.

The Minister of National Defence made a choice to embellish his service record, and he continually chooses to mislead Canadians. He has lost the respect, trust, and confidence not only of our military but also of Canadians.

Without talking points, will the minister do the honourable thing and please step aside?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last weekend, the minister admitted that he made a mistake in describing his role. He set the record straight in the House earlier this week and apologized.

In no way were the minister's comments meant to take away from the role of former senior officers and fellow soldiers. He gave them a heartfelt apology. The minister is proud to have served his country as part of an extraordinary team of Canadian, American, and Afghan soldiers who successfully carried out Operation Medusa.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a former police officer and a soldier, the Minister of National Defence served Canada in an exemplary fashion. Now as a Liberal minister, he has been caught misrepresenting his service to impress an audience.

Can the minister tell Canadians why he felt it was so necessary to abandon the truth about his role in Afghanistan?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the first responsibility of the Minister of National Defence and our government is to look after our troops and ensure that they have the support, training, and equipment to carry out the missions they are assigned.

That has been the minister's objective for the past year and a half and that is what he strives to do every day. One of the key elements of his mandate is to put together a new defence policy. We will ensure that this policy is adequately funded.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Saint-Jean to listen to the question.

As a father, I teach my children to respect others and to never take credit for others' achievements. Engaging in such immoral and unacceptable behaviour would mean losing all trust and credibility.

The minister chose to misrepresent the facts on several occasions. He continues to mislead Canadians. How can he have any credibility with members of the Canadian Armed Forces? How can he continue to oversee the Department of National Defence after losing the respect of every member of the armed forces?

Why does he not resign?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the past year, the minister has been in consultation with experts, Canadians, and all MPs in order to develop a defence policy that will provide the military with the tools, training, and equipment it needs to defend Canada and North America and to secure peace around the world.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, what the defence minister has not done yet is explain why he rewrote history. It was not a mistake; it was deliberate. His own spokesperson confirmed that the minister had personally inserted the word “architect” into that speech in India. The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the minister mentioned the word “honesty” eight times. Clearly, he has not been honest, and his eagerness to take credit from others to pat himself on the back is an affront to our troops.

When will the minister do the right thing? When will he step aside and put our troops ahead of himself?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister has the confidence of the Prime Minister and the entire caucus. All day yesterday, I heard about how credible the minister is. He established the process for a new defence policy that will help make sure that the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces have all the tools they need to successfully complete their missions.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot keep his head in the sand, pretending that Canadians still have confidence in the defence minister. Every time the minister enters a base, every time he rides on a plane, every time he steps on a ship, and every time he addresses our troops, it will haunt him. It will haunt him, because in those multiple moments he chose to embellish, he immediately lost respect, credibility, and the trust of our men and women in uniform and our veterans. The truth is that the minister knows it.

For those reasons, will he do the honourable thing and step down?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister has proven his credibility through all of the work he has done to develop a new defence policy. The consultations he undertook had not happened in 20 years.

This policy will help make sure that all of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces have the equipment, training, and respect they need to complete their missions as effectively as Canada is known for doing.

Oral Questions

• (1135)

*[English]***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, clean drinking water is a right that all Canadians should be able to count on, but just two hours from Ottawa, almost half of the houses in the Algonquin community of Kitigan Zibi do not have safe water, and it has been that way for almost 20 years. Shame on the government for not fixing the problem for all reserves. Our communities cannot wait any longer.

When will the government make it a real priority and treat water like a human right?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this government is probably one of the first governments to have a plan to end all long-term drinking water advisories on reserve and to prevent new advisories. In budget 2016 investments, we have already had 201 projects in 159 communities, serving over 196,000 indigenous Canadians. In this year's budget, we added an additional \$4 billion over 10 years. We are sticking to our goal to end long-term drinking water advisories.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Some progress perhaps, Madam Speaker, but boil water advisories have been added since the Liberals took power.

[Translation]

This week, Algonquin artist Samian denounced the Prime Minister's role and responsibility in violating the basic right to drinking water. Some progress is not enough.

When will the government stop making pretty speeches and guarantee all indigenous communities access to clean drinking water?

[English]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we realize and certainly support it, and we are working hard to ensure clean drinking water for all Canadians, including indigenous Canadians. This is why we are making the commitments that we are. In budget 2016, 201 projects were completed in the country. In budget 2017, there is another \$4 billion to be invested in clean drinking water. Our goal is to make sure that we have clean drinking water in all indigenous communities by 2021 in Canada, and we are going to work hard to meet that goal.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are borrowing money and plan to funnel it to foreign billionaires to subsidize their profits. Make no mistake, that is what the Liberal infrastructure bank will be doing.

Randall Bartlett, the chief economist for the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, has rightly asked, "Why are we privatizing the returns for those assets when they would be going to the public sector?" It is a great question. Can we get an answer from the Liberal government?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, make no mistake: our government wants to attract private capital to Canada, so that we can build more infrastructure across this great country and create good jobs for the middle class.

The infrastructure bank is \$15 billion out of more than a \$180 billion transformational plan for the 21st century. The vast majority of our plan will be delivered through traditional infrastructure funding models alongside our municipal, provincial, and indigenous partners.

We are going to build Canada for the 21st century. We are going to use a lot of tools, and the infrastructure bank is just one of them.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, those are the same worn-out talking points we heard earlier today and we continue to get from the government.

Here is what the experts are saying: "There really isn't a case that's been made for the need for this bank overall, relative to existing tools that we have for infrastructure investment." That is from the policy shop of the former parliamentary budget officer.

Why are the Liberals taking away \$34 billion from communities across Canada to set up this unnecessary and unwanted new bureaucracy here in Ottawa?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is worth repeating that this is but one tool in the arsenal that we have to deliver great quality jobs, great infrastructure, for, let us admit, infrastructure that in this country has been underappreciated for the last 10 years.

The infrastructure bank is just \$15 billion out of a more than \$180 billion plan. The vast majority of our plan will be delivered through our traditional infrastructure funding models alongside municipal, provincial, and indigenous partners.

We are going to build Canada for the 21st century, and we are proud of it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Fifteen billion dollars, Madam Speaker. The parliamentary secretary should read division 18, clause 23 of the budget legislation, which says that it is \$35 billion. That is \$35 billion that, on the same page, will go to things like loan guarantees that ensure that potentially profitable projects, if they go wrong, will end up costing Canadian taxpayers a fortune.

Why is the government privatizing profit while nationalizing risk?

• (1140)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the implementing legislation gives flexibility to the bank. Our plan is to invest \$15 billion out of a more than \$180 billion transformational plan.

Oral Questions

It is worth repeating. The vast majority of our plan will be delivered through traditional infrastructure funding models alongside municipal, provincial, and indigenous partners. Where it makes sense, we are going to attract private capital for models that will serve citizens in a way that otherwise they would not be served.

This is a great idea. This is an opportunity to get leverage from the private sector. We are going to do it all for Canadians to deliver a great infrastructure model for the 21st century.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the Liberals said in the election that they were going to stop giving money to millionaires, they should have clarified they meant that is because they are giving it all to billionaires.

We already knew about the Prime Minister's meetings with billionaires at Davos and at the Shangri-La Hotel, where he discussed the intimate details of this infrastructure bank. Today, Bill Curry of *The Globe and Mail* revealed the documents showing that the government has turned over control of the establishment of this bank to the same people who will profit from it. There is nothing wrong with profit, but reward should go with risk.

This infrastructure bank will put \$35 billion of risk on Canadian taxpayers so insiders can make a profit. Why?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will tell members where we are delivering billions. We are delivering billions to families who need it the most, families who are seeking hard to join the middle class. With our family allocation through taxing the 1%, we have delivered billions to families who need it the most, for school supplies, for food. We are really proud of that record, and we will take that record to the next election.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a lot of heckling going on. I remind members of the rules of the House, that when one member is speaking, another one will not interrupt. I would hope that you would extend that respect.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to stick with Stephen Harper's climate change targets that will not meet our international commitments. Worse, Environment Canada recently projected that we are set to miss even that low bar, exceeding our 2030 target by at least 30%. This was before the Liberals announced delays in implementing key measures, including the methane emission control regulations and the \$1.2 billion to support climate action by the provinces.

The solution is clear: ambitious targets, credible measures to deliver them, and transparency in reporting. When will Canadians see these actions?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am extraordinarily proud of the climate change plan that we were able to negotiate with the provinces and territories in consultation with indigenous peoples. This includes putting a price on pollution, making polluters pay. This includes phasing out coal by 2030. This includes historic investments in public transit, in green infrastructure, and in adaptation.

This includes working with indigenous communities to get them off diesel. This includes historic investments in clean innovation. This will create good jobs and opportunities. We are extremely proud, and we will be moving forward.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the Canada Revenue Agency, there are fine statements of intent and then there is reality. With the Minister of National Revenue, there is talk and there is action.

The minister claims that the fight against tax avoidance is a priority, but a CBC investigation has shown that the number of wealthy taxpayers who have managed not to pay any taxes has doubled since 2011.

The minister says that the net is tightening around tax cheats. Give me a break. It is wide open, and the system benefits the wealthy, who can afford to hire tax avoidance experts.

Does the minister intend to finally put an end to this two-tier system where the wealthy can afford to avoid paying taxes? When will we begin to see some movement on this?

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the CRA continues to take important steps and is making progress in cracking down on tax cheats and ensuring a tax system that is more responsive and fair to all Canadians. Building on a previous investment of \$444 million last year, budget 2017 invests an additional \$524 million to crack down on tax evasion and to improve compliance. The additional funding will have an expected revenue impact of \$2.5 billion over five years. This is what Canadians expect, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

* * *

●(1145)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government was elected on a platform of building sustainable communities in cities and towns all over this great country.

[Translation]

The City of Winnipeg is working alongside the federal government to rebuild our infrastructure for residents.

[English]

The City of Winnipeg is working alongside the federal government to rebuild their infrastructure for the residents who live in those communities. Can the minister provide an update on how the gas tax is benefiting the residents of Winnipeg?

Oral Questions

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, recently our government joined the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, for an important announcement. The city will be using more than \$12.2 million in its annual allocation of the federal gas tax fund created by a Liberal government for improvements to its local roads, back lanes, and sidewalks this year. These projects will improve the quality of life of Winnipeg residents and tourists, through better roads, reduced traffic delays, faster commuting, and increases in the efficiency of the overall transportation network in the city.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Lakeland, Al-Pac, near Athabasca, leads in pulp, paper, biofuels, and jobs, but the lumber mill near Boyle closed, cutting 11% of jobs and \$12 million in annual revenue from town. It was the biggest employer.

Canadian forestry provides more than 370,000 jobs in over 200 communities, but with no softwood lumber deal and new U.S. tariffs, livelihoods are at risk. Meanwhile, the Liberals add costs and red tape on energy, killing investment and jobs, while the U.S. ramps up. When will the Liberals finally champion Canadian jobs and Canadian resources?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our thoughts go out to those families, workers, and communities affected by this very challenging situation. We are taking immediate action to help companies, workers, and local communities affected by these unfair and punitive duties. We continue to work with our counterparts on the federal-provincial task force on softwood lumber to help Canadian forestry workers and communities affected. We will vigorously defend our industry and our workers from the impacts of this decision by the U.S. commerce department.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all know that the party opposite could not care less about the regions and jobs there. The Liberal government had an opportunity to sign a softwood lumber agreement with the former American administration, but it chose to play games with the Trump team instead. Well, the Liberals got the short end of the stick, and now the forestry industry is paying the price for their incompetence with a 24% hike in Canadian softwood lumber import prices.

The Liberals had an agreement. Why did they let it slip through their fingers, and when will they finally take softwood lumber and our regions seriously?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's forestry industry supports hundreds of thousands of good middle-class jobs. We strongly oppose the U.S. Department of Commerce's decision to impose an unfair, punitive tax. The accusations are unfounded. We will continue to bring the matter up with the United States, just as the Prime Minister did with the U.S. President.

The coalition never offered conditions that Canada could accept. We want a good agreement, not just any agreement.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister stumbled onto a Saskatchewan farm last week, he was surprised that they used complicated tools like GPS.

Producers have other tools that are just as important. One of the economic tools they have had for decades was the ability to defer income from cash grain tickets. Now the Liberals are moving to take that away, a move that punishes Canadian producers and rewards the government.

Why is it that every time the Liberals make a move, they rip money out of Canadian pockets and just put it in their own hands?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government strongly supports the Canadian grain industry, which is a key driver of exports, jobs, and economic growth. With changes in recent years in grain marketing, the delivery of listed grain is now the responsibility of the private sector instead of the federal government.

Budget 2017 launches consultations with farmers and stakeholders on this tax deferral, and we want to hear from farmers before moving forward.

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● (1150)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned about their livelihoods. Recent quota changes have created uncertainty and left many wondering how they will make ends meet. However, the fisheries minister does not seem to care.

Twillingate fisherman Richard Gillett had to go on a hunger strike for more than a week to even get a phone call. When will the minister do the right thing and meet with Mr. Gillett?

Oral Questions

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, of course we are very concerned about the situation in Newfoundland and Labrador. We understand how much coastal communities rely on fisheries and oceans, and I am happy to report that the minister has been in contact. We are looking forward to discussions about Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries.

We understand this is a difficult time for the fish harvesters in communities affected by the recent fisheries management decision, but we are investing in science.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, after years of the Phoenix fiasco, there is still no light at the end of the tunnel for thousands of workers. It is interesting that the longer this fiasco drags on, the fewer answers the government can give us about when it will be able to solve it. Maybe that is because this broken system is actually creating new victims every single day.

If the government will not tell us when all the current cases will be resolved, can it at least tell us when it intends to stop creating new ones?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the MP for Gatineau and parliamentary secretary to the minister, I, like all members of the House, have heard stories from public servants in our ridings about the challenges they face because of issues with the pay system. These issues have caused real hardships for many public servants and their families, and many are issues that no family should have to face.

Our government remains resolutely focused on addressing the issue and on deploying the resources, financial and human, needed to address this situation. That is what we are going to do, and that is what we are working on.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, apparently, it can take years to have access to rulings of federal courts in French. The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has been investigating this problem since 2007. Complaints have been piling up for 10 years. This is just further proof that the government is showing no leadership when it comes to official languages. Access to Federal Court rulings in one's first language is a right.

My question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage and official languages. Does she plan to wait another 10 years before fixing this problem?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring Canadians have access to justice in the official language of their choice. Budget 2017 proposes

to provide \$2 million over two years to the Courts Administration Service to enhance federal courts' ability to make decisions available in both English and French.

This new funding is in addition to the new process that our government has already established for Supreme Court of Canada appointments, which includes a policy that judges should be functionally bilingual.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has set up a task force to ponder the trials and tribulations of the Phoenix pay system.

After a year, this is too little too late, and public servants themselves are the ones saying so. Contrary to what the Liberal government and the parliamentary secretary are claiming, there are still some public servants across this country who have not been paid for six months, including the Drouin family in Montreal. There has been absolutely no progress, and some very desperate cases remain outstanding.

When will this government take urgent action to fix the problem once and for all?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that our government is certainly taking positive action, unlike the previous government that acted recklessly and left us this mess after it laid off 700 compensation advisers. That was supposed to save \$70 million, but instead we were left with a broken pay system, one that our government is determined to fix.

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●(1155)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, motivated by the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, the Minister of Transport moved up review of the Railway Safety Act by one year. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the last budget or in the rail safety improvement program to help those whose wounds have yet to heal: the people of Lac-Mégantic. The bypass and the Institut en culture de sécurité industrielle are two projects that can make all the difference.

When will the Minister of Transport put his money where his mouth is and support real rail safety projects for Lac-Mégantic and Canada as a whole?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question because I know that this is very important to him and his community.

Our thoughts continue to go out to the families and loved ones of the victims of the tragedy. Our government is firmly committed to improving rail safety. It is absolutely the minister's first priority. As he said, study of this file continues and that is why—

Oral Questions

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Bow River.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, budget 2017 changed the credit that small oil and gas companies get for resource exploration. This change will hurt a number of small businesses in Bow River and across Canada. The natural resource sector in Alberta is already struggling through tough times with low prices, and these Liberals just do not care.

Why are the Liberals intent on phasing out Canadian oil and gas?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a government, we understand the challenges workers and their families in the energy sector have had over the last few years. Our support for the energy sector reflects a balanced approach that ensures the environment is protected and that good, well-paying jobs are there for Canadians.

We did in one year what the previous government could not do in a decade: approve pipelines, while at the same protecting our oceans, pricing carbon pollution, and working with indigenous peoples.

We believe our approach positions Canada and Canadians well.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the Minister of National Defence has often said in the House, we want to ensure that the military has the tools, resources, and support to carry out the missions they are tasked with.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence give us an example of how the government plans to achieve its objective of establishing a modern, more flexible, and better-equipped military to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for his question and his outstanding work in the region.

We have a responsibility to take care of our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces by providing them with resources. On April 24, the Minister of National Defence announced the construction of two new buildings at Bagotville. The total investment of \$95 million will improve the infrastructure and provide our military with the tools it needs to face the challenges of the 21st century.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have spent the last 18 months cozying up to dictators while Canadian citizens are detained and abused overseas. The latest case is China's arrest of Sun Qian, a Canadian citizen.

China jails dissidents, oppresses minority Uighurs and Tibetans, uses arbitrary detention, and violates the religious rights of Buddhists, Taoists, Christians, and Falun Gong worshippers like Sun Qian.

Why are the Liberals negotiating an extradition treaty with China when it refuses to release Canadians wrongfully arrested?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, certainly the protection of human rights is an integral part of our foreign policy. Canada and China are not extradition partners. There are no extradition negotiations.

As with all cases internationally, our government has a firm commitment to the protection of human rights. The rule of law and due process will continue to be paramount in all our engagements.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, many waterfront communities are experiencing flooding that it is causing significant damage. Volunteers and first responders in both Quebec and Ontario have their hands full helping those affected, and we thank them for the great job they are doing.

Can the Minister of Public Safety give us an update on what the federal government is doing to help the communities affected?

● (1200)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our thoughts are with the Canadians affected by the flooding. Our government is always willing to assist any province or territory that asks for help.

[English]

The government operations centre in my department is on standby. We are speaking to all of the provincial governments involved, including later today.

The first call for assistance is up to the provincial government to determine. If asked, the Government of Canada will respond quickly.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, while the Minister of Status of Women spends millions on her office renovation, women in need are being left behind.

This week at committee we heard testimony from the Canada's Building Trades Unions that no money is available to unions to help advance women in the skilled trades.

Oral Questions

The Liberals have failed to protect vulnerable women and to support their advancement in the skilled trades. When will the minister get her priorities straight?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for an opportunity to acknowledge the significant contributions that the labour movement has made to gender equality in Canada.

I am sure we can all agree that a healthy NGO centre is also vital to the well-being of women and girls in this country. That is why we have funded over 300 projects across the country to address gender-based violence and to improve economic outcomes and leadership for women and girls.

I can assure my hon. colleague that should labour groups want to partner with NGOs, we welcome that.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Quebec minister of sustainable development told the National Assembly that his department was working on a nuclear emergency plan in preparation for the implementation of the nuclear waste disposal project in Chalk River, which is located along the very banks of the Ottawa River. However, the Ottawa River is the source of drinking water for millions of Quebecers and Ontarians.

Does the environment minister support the building of a nuclear waste disposal facility on the banks of the Ottawa River?

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that safe solutions are in place for managing radioactive waste. Radioactive waste owners are responsible for developing and implementing fully funded solutions for the safe and secure management of their waste.

Major waste owners are meeting their responsibilities for developing long-term solutions, and a number of radioactive waste management initiatives are under way, with rigorous oversight from federal regulatory agencies.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): The parliamentary secretary mentions federal agencies, Madam Speaker, but we already know that the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is examining this issue. That was not my question.

We know that the public consultations have not yet begun, but that is not what we want to know. The time to act is now. It is better to be proactive today than radioactive tomorrow.

Does the environment minister seriously think that it is a good idea to pile up mountains of nuclear waste and cover them with geotextile fabric?

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, AECL delivers its mandate to a government-owned, contractor-operated model where-

by the operation of its nuclear laboratories, including decommissioning and waste management work, is delivered by Canadian Nuclear Laboratories.

Under this model, AECL continues to own the land, facilities, assets, and liabilities, whereas the workforce, the licences, and all other aspects of running the site are part of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories' business. AECL today is a small crown corporation whose role is to oversee the contract with Canadian Nuclear Laboratories.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, Resolute Forest Products has confirmed what everyone was afraid of: there will be job losses in the forestry industry because of this conflict.

In my part of the country, in places like Chertsy, Saint-Michel-des-Saints, and Saint-Jean-de-Matha, my birthplace, everyone is worried. Today, the Prime Minister promised to support businesses and regions affected by the softwood lumber conflict.

Will the government honour the Prime Minister's commitment to Quebec's forestry communities and act quickly to support the forestry sector by providing loan guarantees?

● (1205)

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, supporting the workers and communities that depend on forestry jobs is our top priority. Protecting forestry jobs means moving quickly to provide companies and communities with full access to existing loan guarantees and employment and economic diversification programs and expanding export markets while we fight these unfair tariffs on Canada's forestry industry.

We will continue to work with the provinces through our federal-provincial task force to examine additional measures and to address the needs of affected workers and communities.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): *Qujannamiik uqaqti.* Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

The broken nutrition north program continues to fail Nunavummiut. INAC released the "What we heard" report last week, which reiterates the many necessary changes that I and others have been advocating for years.

It is my understanding that there have been further consultations held over the last few days. My question is not about these consultations. It is not about any future meetings or consultations.

When can Nunavummiut expect the much-needed changes to the program to be made?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): *Nakurmiik*, Madam Speaker. I want to recognize the tremendous work and input my colleague from Nunavut has had with regard to nutrition north.

As members know, we have been very engaged in consultations with those across the north. We know it is unacceptable that northerners are struggling to feed their families, and we have every intention of bringing forward a new program that will meet the needs of northerners.

That program review is currently online. We have engaged with 3,500 people and had submissions. We are hoping, very soon, to be able to launch a new program.

* * *

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following public bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-224, an act respecting payments made under construction contracts.

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[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENT TO MOTION REGARDING BILL C-4

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I understand that you are taking under advisement the admissibility of the amendment, moved by the member for Carleton, to the government's motion regarding the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-4, so I would like to very briefly offer my argument in support of the admissibility of that amendment.

At page 532 of O'Brien and Bosc, it states, "A motion in amendment arises out of debate and is proposed either to modify the original motion in order to make it more acceptable to the House". I believe that the amendment would do just that.

The Senate has amended Bill C-4 to uphold a fundamental principle of democracy, which is that the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority. Why the government wanted to take this away in the first place is perplexing, since it is proposing secret ballot elections in House committees.

At page 533 of O'Brien and Bosc, it states, "An amendment is out of order...if it is completely contrary to the main motion and would produce the same result as the defeat of the main motion." Madam Speaker, I believe this may be the reason for your deliberations on the matter.

Would the defeat of the main motion to the Senate amendment made to Bill C-4 have the same effect as voting for the amendment

Routine Proceedings

proposed by my colleague? I believe that the answer is clearly no. If the government's motion were to be defeated, I would argue that nothing would happen. The government would need to come back with an alternative motion with a different proposition. However, if my colleague's amendment were to be adopted, both the House and the Senate will have adopted Bill C-4 in an identical form, and it would move to eventually receiving royal assent as amended.

As the *Journals* of June 6, 1923, at page 437, state, the Speaker ruled that an amendment to alter the main question by submitting a proposition with the opposite conclusion is not an "expanded negative" and may be moved.

This amendment indeed offers the opposite conclusion: that is, to accept the amendment made by the Senate that supports democracy. The government's motion rejects this democratic principle. Voting for or against the government's motion would have a different outcome than would voting for my colleague's amendment. Therefore, I ask that you, Madam Speaker, accept the amendment and allow this House to express its views on preserving a fundamental principle of democracy, which is that the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority.

● (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the opposition House leader for the additional comments. I will take them under advisement as I continue to deliberate on this, and I will be back before the House with a response as soon as I can, which should be shortly.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

PETITIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions to table from Albertans.

The first is a petition from Edmontonians calling on the government to comply with the historic Human Rights Tribunal ruling to fund systemic shortfalls in first nations child welfare and to end systemic discrimination against first nations children.

Routine Proceedings

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from people across Alberta calling on the government to introduce mandatory labelling of products containing ingredients that are genetically modified and to undertake more balanced approvals for the use of GMOs.

CANADA POST

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, third is a petition from over 900 Albertans from many Alberta rural communities, from Cold Lake to Vegreville and Wetaskiwin to Wainwright, asking the government to reverse the cuts to Canada Post services and to consider innovation, including postal banking.

The final petition is from Albertans calling on the government to instruct Canada Post to halt plans to downsize and downgrade public post offices and to instruct Canada Post to consult the public in improving the Canadian Postal Service Charter to develop better processes to change retail and delivery services.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to present three petitions in the House today.

The first petition highlights that 22-year-old Cassandra Kaulius was tragically killed by a drunk driver, a person who foolishly chose to drive while impaired. Cassandra's family is devastated. Families for Justice is a group of Canadians whose loved ones were killed by impaired drivers. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They have provided a letter from the Prime Minister saying that he would support legislation similar to the last Parliament's. The petitioners are calling on this Parliament to keep those promises of the Prime Minister and to pass legislation to toughen up our impaired driving laws.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I am honoured to present regards sex selection. It highlights the fact that ultrasounds are being used to determine the sex of a child, and if it is a girl, the pregnancy is ended. Ninety-two per cent of Canadians say that it is abhorrent and should not be happening, and they are calling on the House to condemn that practice.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the last petition is about conscience protection. In Ontario, physicians are being forced to do medical procedures against their consciences. The petitioners are saying that this should not be happening in Canada and that we need to change the laws in Canada and make sure that the conscience rights of all Canadians, including physicians and health care professionals, are being protected.

* * *

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. 924, 929 to 932, and 936.

[Text]

Question No. 924—**Mr. Jacques Gourde:**

With regard to the Canada 150 Fund administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage: (a) how many applications (i) were successful and awarded funding under this program, (ii) were rejected; (b) with respect to successful applications, what was the location and value of each project, broken down by (i) province, (ii) federal electoral district, (iii) corresponding file and reference number, (iv) recipient, (v) amount, (vi) project description, (vii) date of award; and (c) with respect to rejected applications, what was the location and value of each proposal, broken down by (i) province, (ii) federal electoral district, (iii) corresponding file and reference number, (iv) reason for rejection?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and (b), the information in the requested format is not readily accessible in the Department of Canadian Heritage's financial systems. Extensive manual research would be necessary to provide a comprehensive response. This operation cannot be completed within the allotted time frame. However, grants and contributions awarded by PCH, Canadian Heritage, since April 1, 2015, are available on the departmental proactive disclosure website at: <http://canada.pch.gc.ca/eng/1453476384672/1453476482298>.

With regard to (c), in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. The requested information has been withheld on the grounds that the information is considered sensitive third party information.

Question No. 929—**Mr. Kevin Waugh:**

With regard to the "Modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons" discussion paper, published by the Government House Leader on March 10, 2017: (a) why was it not laid upon the Table of the House of Commons prior to being published; (b) were any parliamentarians or political parties consulted in the preparation of the discussion paper and, if so, (i) who was consulted, (ii) when were they consulted; (c) were any Clerks at the Table or Procedural Services staff from the House of Commons consulted in the preparation of the discussion paper and, if so, (i) who was consulted, (ii) when were they consulted; and (d) were any academics, experts, or any other outside advisors consulted in the preparation of the discussion paper and, if so, (i) who was consulted, (ii) when were they consulted, (iii) were they paid in relation to the consultation?

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

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the discussion paper entitled "Modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons", the government House leader published the discussion paper on the Government of Canada website to foster discussion with parliamentarians and all Canadians on ways to modernize the House and make it a 21st century workplace.

The paper was prepared in the office of the government House leader and the public engagement process followed the public release of the paper.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 930—Mr. Kevin Waugh:**

With regard to the “Modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons” discussion paper, published by the Government House Leader on March 10, 2017: (a) how many employees of the Privy Council Office, and any other departments, were involved in (i) preparing and writing the discussion paper, (ii) editing and publishing it; (b) with respect to the answers in (a), what are the titles, occupational groups and levels of the employees involved; (c) how many contractors of the Government House Leader’s Office, Office of the Prime Minister, the Privy Council Office, and any other departments, were involved in (i) preparing and writing the discussion paper, (ii) editing and publishing it; and (d) with respect to the answers in (c), (i) what are the titles of the contractors, (ii) what services were contracted, (iii) what is the value of the services contracted, (iv) how much were they paid for their services?

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

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the discussion paper entitled Modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, the government House leader’s discussion paper was prepared by the office of the government House leader, the GHL. The paper and accompanying news release were posted on the GHL’s website at www.canada.ca/en/leader-government-house-commons.html by the Privy Council Office in accordance with the directive on the management of communications.

Question No. 931—Mr. Kevin Waugh:

With regard to the “Modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons” discussion paper, published by the Government House Leader on March 10, 2017: (a) what reports, texts, treatises, or other published authorities, were reviewed in respect of the preparation of the discussion paper; (b) which parliaments and legislatures’ rules or standing orders were reviewed in respect of the preparation of the discussion paper; (c) with respect to the reference to written questions being divided, pursuant to Standing Order 39(2), what are the last five occasions when that authority was used, according to the government’s records; and (d) was any research undertaken with respect to the preparation of the discussion paper?

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

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the following sources were consulted in the preparation of the discussion paper: from the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons, SMIP, September 2002 to November 2003, its fifth report, on taking of divisions by electronic means, presented to the House on Thursday, June 12, 2003; its fourth report, presenting recommendations on the modernization and improvement of the procedures of the House of Commons, concurred in by the House on Thursday, September 18, 2003; and its third report, regarding private members’ business and recommending the implementation of the first report as adopted by the House on February 20, 2003 and concurred in by the House on Monday, March 17, 2003; from the Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons, its third report; from the U.K.’s Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons’ first report, found at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmmodern/589/58902.htm>, of April 2, 2001, session 2000-2001, “Programming of Legislation”, HC 382, and second report, found at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200001/cmselect/cmmodern/382/38202.htm>, of September 5, 2002, session 2001-2002, “Modernization of the House of Commons: A Reform Programme”, HC 1168 also at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmmodern/1168/1168.pdf> and <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmrefhoc/1117/1117.pdf>; from the U.K.’s House of Commons Procedure Committee, found at <https://www>.

[publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmproced/767/767.pdf](https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmproced/767/767.pdf), December 5, 2013, the third report of session 2013-2014, “Programming”, HC 767; the sixth report, found at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmproced/1220/1220.pdf>, April 7, 2014, “Programming: proposal for a trial of new arrangements for tabling of amendments to bills at report stage”, HC 1120; and fourth report, found at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmproced/823/823.pdf>, May 5, 2016, of session 2015-2016, “Programming: evaluation of the trial of new arrangements for tabling amendments”, HC 823.

With regard to (b), reviews of procedures and practices of the following legislatures were reviewed in the preparation of the discussion paper: British House of Commons, Swedish Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly of Wales, New Zealand Parliament, Parliament of Ireland, Parliament of Australia, U.S. House of Representatives, and all provincial and territorial legislatures.

With regard to (c), the authority to split a written question resides with the Speaker and is carried out by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Commons. Furthermore, the archives where such questions can be found are held by the Library of Parliament and are available for public consultation.

With regard to (d), yes. As outlined above, many sources were consulted in the preparation of the discussion paper. It was based upon best practices in provincial and international legislatures.

Question No. 932—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to the government’s plan to mandate plain packaging for cigarettes: what are the details of any memorandums or briefing notes on plain packaging since November 4, 2015, including (i) title, (ii) date, (iii) sender, (iv) recipient, (v) subject matter, (vi) file number?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, there were three briefing notes. In the first, the title was “Plain Packaging—Public Consultations on the Appearance and Dimensions of Tobacco Packages and of Tobacco Products”. The date was March 25, 2016. The sender was the Tobacco Control Directorate. The recipient was the Minister of Health. The subject matter was the analysis of approaches to plain packaging and next steps on consultation. The file number is MECS 16-102070-125.

In the second, the title was “Plain and Standardized Packaging for Tobacco Products – Document for Public Consultations and Online Fluid Survey”. The date was May 31, 2016. The sender was the Tobacco Control Directorate. The recipient was the Minister of Health. The subject matter was finalization of the consultation document on plain packaging. The file number is 16-104605-507.

In the third, the title was “Publication of a Consultation Summary for the Regulatory Proposal on Plain and Standardized Packaging for Tobacco Products”. The date was January 13, 2017. The sender was the Tobacco Control Directorate. The recipient was the deputy minister. The subject matter was publication of a summary of the feedback received from the public consultation. The file number is 17-100314-730.

Routine Proceedings

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 cabinet information.

Question No. 936—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the Critical Injury Benefit program at Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC): (a) what is the number of staff currently overseeing the program; and (b) since November 4, 2015, what has been the total amount spent on the program, broken down by (i) salaries and benefits paid to VAC staff administering the program, (ii) office expenses related to program administration, (iii) advertising for the program, (iv) pay-outs to qualifying veterans?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), six Veterans Affairs Canada staff oversee and administer the critical injury benefit program. Three full-time equivalent, FTE, employees oversee disability benefits and program management in the critical injury benefit program: a national program manager, a program specialist, and a program analyst. Three full-time equivalent, FTE, employees administer disability benefits in centralized operations division of the critical injury benefit program: nurse adjudicators, benefits operations adjudicators, and processing clerks/disability services assistants.

With regard to (b)(i), the salaries paid to the six VAC staff administering the program from November 4, 2015, to March 28, 2017, amount to \$281,979.00.

With regard to (b)(ii), the office expenses related to program administration from November 4, 2015, to March 28, 2017, were \$23,499.00. With regard to (b)(iii), no advertising funds have been allocated to the critical injury benefit program from November 4, 2015, to March 28, 2017.

With regard to (b)(iii), no advertising funds have been allocated to the critical injury benefit program from November 4, 2015, to March 28, 2017.

With regard to (b)(iv), as of March 28, 2017, the following expenditures were incurred: for the period from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016, \$7.94 million was expended; for the period from April 1, 2016, to March 28, 2017, \$2.49 million was expended.

* * *

•(1215)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if a supplementary response to Question No. 668, originally tabled on January 30, 2017, and a revised response to Question No. 814, originally tabled on March 20, 2017, as well as the government's response to Questions No. 925 to 928, 933 to 935, and 937 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be table immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 668—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program, between the program's launch and November 30, 2016: (a) what projects have been submitted for funding from the constituencies of Kenora, Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Thunder Bay—Superior North, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Timmins—James Bay, Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, Nickel Belt, Nipissing—Timiskaming, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Parry Sound—Muskoka, Mississauga—Malton, broken down by constituency; and (b) for each of the projects in (a), which have been approved for funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 814—Mr. David Anderson:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to the Bahamas in December 2016 and January 2017: (a) what was the total cost to taxpayers; (b) what is the itemized breakdown of each expense related to the trip, including costs related to security, transportation, accommodation, meals, per diems, and other expenses; (c) how many government employees, including exempt staff, were on the trip; and (d) excluding pilots and security personnel, what were the titles of government employees on the trip?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 925—Mr. Alexander Nuttall:

With regard to the Prime Minister's attendance at the performance of *Come From Away* in New York on March 15, 2017: (a) how many tickets the government purchased; (b) what was the amount spent by the government on tickets; (c) who received the tickets which the government purchased; (d) with the exception of travel, were there any other expenses incurred by the government related to the performance; and (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, what are the amounts and details of such expenses?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 926—Mr. Alexander Nuttall:

With regard to government expenditures at the Rideau Club, since November 4, 2015, broken down by department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what are the details of all expenditures at the Rideau Club including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of good or service provided; and (b) for any memberships purchased by the government at the Rideau Club, who was the membership for?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 927—Ms. Linda Duncan:

With regard to funding for post-secondary institutions, for each fiscal year since 2014-15, broken down by department: (a) what is the total amount of funds provided to the University of Alberta; and (b) for what purpose was each contribution or grant provided for?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 928—Mr. Robert Sopuck:

With regard to the decision by Parks Canada to deny the application by the producers of the movie *Hard Powder* to film in a National Park: (a) when was the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change informed of the decision; (b) what was the rationale for the decision; (c) when was the Minister of Canadian Heritage informed of the decision; and (d) what are the details of any government funding or contributions, including tax credits, which have been made available to the producers of this movie?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 933—Mr. Colin Carrie:

With regard to contraband cigarettes and the government's tobacco control strategy, since December 1, 2015, broken down by province and territory and by month, how many contraband or illegal cigarettes have been seized by the (i) Royal Canadian Mounted Police or (ii) Canada Border Services Agency?

Government Orders

(Return tabled)

Question No. 934—**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the April 13, 2016, announcement allocating \$800 million in spending over five years to Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to revitalize their Chalk River facility: (a) how much of the funding has been spent as of March 17, 2017; and (b) for all the spending indicated in (a), what is the break-down of the spending by (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) project funded, (iv) anticipated completion date of project funded, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 935—**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program, between the program's launch and March 17, 2017: (a) what projects have been submitted for funding from the constituencies of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, Kenora, Mississauga—Malton, Nickel Belt, Nipissing—Timiskaming, Parry Sound—Muskoka, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Thunder Bay—Superior North, and Timmins—James Bay, broken down by constituency; and (b) for each of the projects in (a), what is (i) the approval status of the project, (ii) the amount of funding requested, (iii) the amount of funding approved?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 937—**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to the answer to Q-667, how was the \$805,087,514 in uncommitted funds from four legacy federal infrastructure programs – Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund, Border Infrastructure Fund, Green Infrastructure Fund, and 2007 Building Canada Fund, spent between November 4, 2015, and March 22, 2016, broken down by (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) source federal program from which the funding came from, (iv) details of the recipient of funding, including for each their name, province, postal code, and municipality?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would 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]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1

The House resumed from May 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Edmonton West had six minutes remaining in his speech when this was last before the House.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to finish my speech from yesterday regarding Bill C-44, the line of credit bill.

I started my speech yesterday with a description of what my oldest son said about the bill when I told him it was \$100 billion of debt with which he and his generation would be stuck. His comment was “What the heck, Dad. Thanks for sticking us with this bill.”

Before I was cut off at the end of the day yesterday, I finished my part talking about the Liberals' propensity for how much they consulted on the budget. I would absolutely love to meet the people who said yes to higher taxes on oil and gas exploration. I will take a wild guess that it is not the energy workers whose jobs rely on the energy development projects. Canadians who said yes to higher taxes on the oil and gas industry are probably the same ones who told the Prime Minister to leave the oil in the ground.

I am not surprised the Prime Minister listened to that advice, but I am stunned that the four Liberal MPs from Alberta sit idle, while the government writes into the budget how it will use the tax system to reduce emissions and greenhouse gases, and by extension, phase out the oil sands. The government is fine for hundreds of millions of dollars in bailouts and bonuses for Bombardier to make energy-guzzling, greenhouse gas belching planes, and hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars for its Ontario auto industry for cars running, surprisingly, on gas. However, for Alberta's energy industry it will use the tax system to phase it out, and make a special effort to tell everyone by placing it right in the budget.

By 2021, Canada will be \$102 billion further into debt, which is an average of \$4,000 per taxpayer that needs to be paid back. The Liberals promised that this deluge of spending would lead to unprecedented levels of economic growth. Just one year ago, they were musing about a multiplier effect of three to four times the size of the investment. It turns out they were wrong, and we got 1.7% growth.

The Globe and Mail noted that the bulk of the Liberal deficit spending had not been about infrastructure. It is borrowing for groceries more than the mortgage. The question is whether the Liberals, who have repeatedly moved the goal post, will be able to live within this constraint.

What are those billions actually going toward? Innovation? I wonder if the government knows what innovation means, if it actually has a definition, or if it is just like the middle class. The Liberals do not know what it is, they cannot define it, but it sounds pretty good so they will repeat it a few hundred times and hope something happens.

The budget is innovative though, truly the most innovative budget ever. To prove it to us, the word “innovation” appears more than 200 times in the budget. Unfortunately, simply repeating something does not make it true. We need a plan. We need tangible goals and outcomes and a real means of achieving growth.

The Liberals have announced initiatives thousands of times, indeed over 4,200 times since winning the election in 2015. However, as the parliamentary budget officer noted, even though the government has a penchant for announcing funding, it has completely failed to ensure the money gets out the door. This year alone, over \$2 billion in infrastructure funding was allowed to lapse because the government was simply incapable of writing the cheque.

Government Orders

The government will stand and respond breathlessly that at least it is doing something, and demand of us, the opposition, some policy options to counter its own. We have provided those ideas. My Alberta colleagues and I provided very specific recommendations in our Alberta jobs task force report that was submitted to the finance minister. We consulted with over 5,000 Alberta families, small businesses, and stakeholders affected by the economic downturn. By the way, in case anyone is wondering, none of those we consulted said to jack up taxes on the gas and oil industry and phase out the oil sands.

We advised the government of these options provided to us in the jobs task force, which include: reduce the tax burden on Canadians by stopping the carbon tax; honour the promise to lower the small business tax; support families in need by reversing the punishing new mortgage rules; and enhance Canada's fiscal strength by developing and communicating a clear path back to a balanced budget. These are good, meaningful, and broadly supported recommendations that would help not only Albertans but Canadians. It is too bad the government is all too happy to ignore them.

Instead, the government will take as much as it can from Canadians to fund buzzwords, undefined ideas, palatial renovations to ministers' offices, limousines for cabinet ministers, and vacations for the Prime Minister to billionaire island.

Two years ago, the government promised to table budgets with modest deficits. It bragged and boasted that its costed plan meant it could keep its promise to Canadians, and also manage our finances. Once this promise became inconvenient, it was taken out back and "dealt with", like Tony Soprano cutting off loose ends and handling "problems".

• (1220)

By the time budget 2016 was tabled, the Liberal promise to balance the budget by 2019 disappeared entirely. The new reality of deficits well into the 2050s is now treated like Lord Voldemort, something really bad and evil that we know is out there but we do not mention it by name.

What are we getting for \$102 billion in debt and higher taxes? What are our children receiving for a mortgaged future? Buzzwords about superclusters, rampant announcements for items well into the future, but misleading treated as action today and nothing but bafflegab. "What the heck, Dad", indeed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member makes reference to "bafflegab" and "rhetoric". I have listened for the last six minutes, and he might want to reflect on some of that.

When we talk about the province of Alberta, the Conservative Harper government failed at getting any pipelines to tidewaters. In less than 18 months, not only did we establish a process under this administration, we are now advancing and will be seeing two pipelines, understanding the importance of our environment and economic development. That is the realization of thousands of jobs, not only for the province of Ontario but for many other Canadians.

I had to laugh when the member made reference to ministerial limousines. The Harper government did not say no to limousines. I

recall when Stephen Harper flew to India and he flew his limousine there too, at a million dollar cost to the taxpayers.

The member talked about the discussion he had with his son. I wonder if he told his son that \$150 billion were added to the debt by Stephen Harper. Did he tell his son about that and what did his son have to say about the \$150 billion debt added by the Harper government?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to answer that. My son is in grade 12. He is a very strong and bright Conservative, who is already reading Adam Smith. He does not have to be told about that \$150 billion because he remembers the Liberal Party, in coalition with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, demanding that billions more be added to the deficit. Therefore, shame on the member for trying to mislead Canadians on this.

My son does not have to be told about the disgraceful conduct of that party during that time, trying to take down a validly-elected government and jack up billions more in spending.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, when we bring up our families in debate, we usually bring up our children, and we talk about what type of legacy we will leave for the next generation. In his case, the member brought up both of his sons and the debt they would be facing in the future. Therefore, I would like to hear him expand on that, with this ridiculous tax plan the government has proposed, this so-called middle income tax cut, which gave the biggest tax cut to the wealthiest. Those of us in this chamber earn just enough to be eligible for the full benefit of the supposed middle-income tax cut.

I would also like to hear more from him on the national debt. The Liberal government has absolutely no plan to either pay down the debt or to control its spending, with a \$28.5 billion deficit just this year. Every table in its budget shows it increasing the national debt. Therefore, I would like to hear more from the member in comment on that matter.

• (1225)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, what we are doing to the next generation is an absolute disgrace. I have to go home every Friday night, and I do stay on Fridays, and apologize to my children for the actions of the federal government in jacking up taxes and mortgaging their future. There is not one answer ever from the government as to how we will pay this money back. This is not just free money.

Government Orders

The Liberals talk so much about their incredible middle-class tax cut, which delivers about a dollar a day to the average Canadian. It is not very much, but it does add up into the billions. However, this is not free money; it is borrowed money. They misled Canadians when they said that it would be paid for by a tax on the wealthiest 1%. That is incorrect. That is not true. It is borrowed money being used for this tax cut, money that will be paid back later. It is like going to an ATM, taking money out and saying, "Oh, look, I made a bunch of money." It is not. It is borrowed money. The government should be ashamed of itself for continuing to mislead Canadians in this manner.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to budget 2017. It is a continuation of the plan that we ran on in the last election and began to enact with last year's budget, a plan to build a strong foundation for economic growth and prosperity that will ensure all Canadians can share in our success.

We on this side of the House like to talk a lot about the middle class and those working hard to reach it, and that is important.

I have many middle-class families in my riding that need just a little help making ends meet. They have to choose between investing in their children's education and saving for retirement. We have put many initiatives in place to help them, from a strengthened Canada pension plan and a middle-class tax cut to the Canada child benefit and increased student assistance.

All of this is important, but today I would like to talk about helping those families for which the middle class seems out of reach no matter how hard they work to reach it, for low income Canadians who need to choose between paying the rent to keep a roof over their heads and buying groceries to put food on the table and for whom the high cost of child care prevents both parents from participating in the workforce and bringing an important second paycheck home. I have many of these families in my riding of Scarborough Centre and I am here to speak for them.

I heard their stories during the campaign, and I continue to hear their stories when I meet my constituents at coffee shops, town halls, and on their doorsteps.

One of the first things our government did to help them was to introduce the Canada child benefit. By making it tax free and targeted to those families who need it most, families with less than \$30,000 in net income receive the maximum benefit of \$6,400 per child under the age of six, and \$5,400 per child for those aged six through 17. This initiative alone has lifted more than 300,000 children out of poverty and is making a real difference for low income families.

We also addressed seniors living in poverty by increasing the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit for single seniors to up to \$947 annually, improving the financial security of about 900,000 single seniors across Canada.

Those are just a few of the measures from last year's budget, and I am pleased to see more strong action to help low-income Canadians in budget 2017.

For me, the signature item in budget 2017 is the investment in housing. For too long the federal government has been on the sidelines when it comes to housing in Canada. We have not been at

the table when provinces, municipalities, and affordable housing providers have tried to tackle this critical issue. After a decade of absence, the cry for federal leadership is finally being answered by this government.

In Scarborough, housing is a pressing issue. Affordable housing is the bridge to improved prosperity for low-income families. Housing is a public health issue, a public safety issue, and an economic issue. Having a safe, clean, and affordable place to live allows children to fully participate and succeed in school. It allows their parents to go to work not having to worry about keeping a roof over their heads or having to make difficult choices between rent and groceries.

Unfortunately, housing is increasingly precarious for too many families. The stock of affordable housing is increasingly limited and in poor shape. Developers are building unaffordable condos and even converting rental buildings to condos instead of investing in new rental stock. Existing rental stock is often in poor shape and is being priced out of reach for many families in Scarborough. This forces them to live in unclean, unsafe, and often overcrowded environments. It forces them to make difficult choices no family should have to make.

● (1230)

That is why I am excited about the new national housing strategy that will be coming from the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and with the \$11.2-billion investment proposed in budget 2017 to help build, renew, and repair Canada's stock of affordable housing.

With stable and predictable funding over the next decade, the government will work in partnership with the provinces and territories to help ensure that Canadians have affordable housing that meets their needs. This will include a new \$5-billion national housing fund to address critical housing issues and better support vulnerable citizens, renewed and expanded federal investments to combat and prevent homelessness, more federal lands for the development of affordable housing, and expanded funding to strengthen CMHC's housing research activities.

We will work with the provinces to support priorities that include the construction of new affordable housing units, the renovation and repair of existing housing, rent subsidies and other measures to make housing more affordable, and initiatives to support safe, independent living for our seniors, persons with disabilities, and other individuals requiring accessibility modification.

Government Orders

With the new national housing fund, there will be a co-investment fund to help pool resources from other housing partners, direct lending to municipalities and housing partners for the repair and renewal of housing units, as well as the construction of new affordable housing units, and support to help social housing providers maintain rent-geared-to-income units when long-term operating agreements expire.

This is a much needed renewal of federal leadership in the housing space, and will make a real difference over the years to come to lower-income families in Scarborough and across Canada that face a precarious housing situation and struggle to find an affordable place to live.

Another highlight for budget 2017 is the substantial and substantive investments in early learning and child care. When I speak to Scarborough families, they tell me that next to affordable housing, their biggest challenge and biggest concern is access to affordable, quality child care. For lower-income families, the high cost of child care can mean one parent is forced to stay at home instead of entering the workforce and bringing a much needed second paycheck into the household.

This is another area where federal leadership has been sorely lacking over the last decade. The “create a tax credit and walk away” approach of the last government did nothing to encourage the creation of more affordable child care spaces, and is a drop in the bucket compared to the costs families are facing right now.

Like affordable housing, early learning and child care is also an economic issue. With access to affordable child care, both parents can choose to participate in the workforce, and a child with access to early learning support will be better positioned to succeed in school and in life.

Last year's budget made an initial investment this year in early learning and child care of \$500 million. I am pleased to see that budget 2017 builds on this commitment by investing an additional \$7 billion over 10 years to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care spaces in Scarborough and across Canada. Over the next three years, we hope this investment can increase the number of affordable child care spaces for low-income and modest-income families by supporting up to 40,000 new subsidized child care spaces, as well as make it more affordable for parents to return to work.

Real action here, though, will require a collaborative approach, and it will require a long-term plan. That is why I'm pleased the government is working with the provinces and territories to develop a national framework on early learning and child care, focusing on best practices and new approaches to best serve families.

There are many more items in this budget that will make a difference to lower-income Canadian families, but I feel these substantive and long-term investments in housing and in early learning and child care will make a meaningful and lasting difference for Canadian families struggling to make ends meet.

•(1235)

That is why I am pleased to support this budget. I invite my colleagues to join me in supporting it as well.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are some things in the budget that I do support. Of the things that is being implemented has to do with the family caregiver benefits. I think the extension of those benefits beyond what was identified previously is a positive thing. However, there are certain things with this implementation that I am a bit concerned about.

We have the child care space exemption. There was the elimination of the credits for people who are independently, in their businesses, eliminating those tax credits. I was hoping the member could talk about that.

Also, what is being done with respect to rural areas? We talk about housing. Are we going to make sure that this impacts all 338 ridings or, like previous housing issues, are they going to be specifically looking at Toronto and some of the larger cities and not looking at the impact on the rural communities? That is another big concern I have.

Perhaps you could talk to me about the elimination of the tax credit for businesses which are building the child care spaces. Why is that going to be eliminated? How can we make that better?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will not speak to you about it, but I would ask the member to address the questions to the Chair.

The hon. for Scarborough Centre.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, budget 2017 is the next step in our government's ambitious plan to create more jobs, to grow the economy, and to provide more opportunities for every Canadian. That means providing more opportunities for middle-class families and those working hard to join the middle class.

We introduced the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine out of 10 Canadian families and which has lifted over 300,000 kids out of poverty. It is making a real difference in the lives of people every day. We will continue to build on our plan. We increased the taxes for the wealthiest 1% to give tax breaks to middle-class families. The plan is working, and I am sure it will continue working for the next many years.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do feel that my colleague is very sincere. She and I share a lot of the same concerns in our ridings around child care and around affordable housing.

Unfortunately, what I am finding during this debate is that when push comes to shove, when we ask what the government is actually doing this year, in this budget, to make a difference in the lives of people in our ridings, we often get the reference back to the previous budget and the measures that were put into place.

I would like the member to comment on the fact there is no money in this year's budget for child care, and how she feels about that.

Government Orders

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, budget 2017 does make long-term commitments. This is by design. We have heard loud and clear from provinces, municipalities, community organizations, and stakeholders that they need long-term stable and predictable commitments from the federal government to help them plan and leverage federal investments with their own funding to tackle the many pressing issues Canada is facing that are too complicated and long term to solve in one budget.

Communities want the federal government to be a long-term partner. That is why we are doing it.

●(1240)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I am all for long-term planning. I am all for working in collaboration with the provinces. What I have an issue with in this budget implementation bill is the commitments the government is making beyond its mandate. To me, those are not sincere commitments. They go much beyond the mandate, both for housing and for child care.

I would like to have her comments about what the government is doing in this term to help child care and to help people with housing.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, we are committed to making long-term investments. When I talk to my constituents in the riding of Scarborough Centre, I hear all the time that they have to make tough decisions, such as whether to have a roof over their heads or to pay for groceries for their kids.

Through our budget, we are making sure that middle-class families get immediate help. Those people who need the help get immediate help through the Canada child benefit, through tax breaks.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENT TO MOTION REGARDING BILL C-4

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am responding to the opposition House leader's intervention on the admissibility of the amendment proposed to the motion respecting Senate amendments to Bill C-4. Let me be clear. The motion rejects the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-4. I submit that the amendment is out of order and procedural authorities and precedents support this argument.

Page 533 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states:

An amendment is out of order procedurally, if...

it is completely contrary to the main motion and would produce the same result as the defeat of the main motion....

The footnote that expands on the reference above is most relevant in this situation. It states:

Expanded negative amendments strike out all the words after "That" in a motion in order to substitute a proposition with the opposite conclusion of the original motion.

This is precisely what the amendment seeks to do: reverse the intent of the motion before the House. The appropriate course of action for members who oppose the motion is to vote against the

motion. The procedural authorities and precedents are clear that the amendment is, indeed, out of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the intervention from the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. I will take the information under advisement. I will need a bit more time to deliberate on this issue and will get back to the House as soon as I am able with the response.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this budget is disappointing, both for what it provides and does not provide. Counted among our critical duties as elected members is holding the government accountable for its spending.

As per Standing Order 80, the House retains the sole authority to authorize supply. In 2002, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates was established, with a clear mandate to guide and oversee the House of Commons estimates review process, either directly through the estimates documents, or indirectly by examining government operations.

As critic for public works at the time, I participated in a review to strengthen parliamentary scrutiny of estimates and supply. We examined both the format and timing of estimates and program priorities, and the need for greater support to members of this place in effective scrutiny of spending.

As the report states, "Parliament's control of the public purse is still very much at the heart of our democratic government."

Among the challenges facing members is the lack of access to information, expertise, and the time to fully understand and review estimates and operations. We need access to clear, consistent, and reliable information and analysis. Many experts support the appointment of an independent parliamentary budget officer, mandated to assist members and the committees in their evaluations of spending.

What actions have been taken by the government to deliver on its promises of more open and accountable governance, and the creation of an independent PBO? Despite election promises, it tabled a 300-plus page omnibus budget implementation bill, amending no less than 30 bills. As well, despite promises to the contrary, this omnibus bill strikes a blow to the ability of the members of this place to deliver our responsibilities.

Government Orders

Bill C-44 significantly reduces the independence of the PBO, and in turn the ability of that office to serve the needs of members. Why is the PBO so important? The office was established specifically to provide independent analysis to this place and the other place, about “the state of the nation's finances”, the estimates of the government, “and trends in the [national] economy; and...to estimate the financial cost of any proposal” of a matter under federal jurisdiction.

Analyses and reports of the PBO have proven invaluable in disclosing issues on costing and spending. During the election, the Liberals espoused clear support for an independent PBO:

We will not interfere with the work of government watchdogs. [...] We will ensure that all of the officers are properly funded and accountable only to Parliament, not the government of the day.

We will ensure that the [PBO] is truly independent, properly funded, and [answerable] only—and directly—to Parliament....

While in opposition, the Liberals echoed our calls to the Harper government to act immediately to make the PBO an independent officer reporting directly to Parliament. While now in power, what have the Liberals done to the PBO? Are they making the parliamentary budget officer an independent officer reporting to Parliament? No. They are mandating the Speakers of the two Houses to scrutinize both the priorities and spending by the PBO. They are further reducing its independence.

It is another broken election promise, and a serious blow to the mandate of the PBO and to the ability of the members in this place to carry out our responsibilities to hold the government to account. An important reminder to all members of this place, including on the government side, is that holding the government accountable for spending is not just the duty of opposition members, it is the duty of all elected MPs.

We all benefit from an independent parliamentary budget officer. The government says it is open to amendments, so please strike down these measures that are reducing the independence of the parliamentary budget officer.

What is missing from the budget bill? After 18 months in office, not a single bill has been tabled by the government, let alone enacted, to protect the environment. If it so favours the return of omnibus budget bills, why not have one to restore the laws that Stephen Harper eviscerated and the Liberals promised to restore?

There has been no bill to restore the protections to navigable waters, a once critical trigger for environment assessment. There has been no bill tabled to extend to Canadians a voice in policies and approvals impacting their health or environment, a commitment that is imposed on the government under NAFTA. There has been no bill tabled to restore a credible environmental assessment process or even interim reforms, as the government glibly approves major resource project after resource project.

●(1245)

Finally, there has been no bill tabled to enact the rights prescribed under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The current government espouses to support those rights, including the right to free, prior, and informed consent to development on their territories that is impacting their peoples. However, again we see first nations peoples and Métis having to take the government to court, because of its approval of the Site C dam,

because of its approval of pipelines, and because of its abject refusal to even review major projects and consider right to title of first nations peoples.

While there are pages of rhetoric in the budget bill on the Liberals' commitment to clean energy, there are close to zero dollars allocated to be spent on those important roles this fiscal year. We have raised this continually. They say that over 10 years, over the next decade, blah, blah, blah, they are going to commit all kinds of dollars to child care, to housing, and shifting to a cleaner energy economy. When we actually look at the pages of the budget bill where they allocate the dollars, they allocate absolutely zero for a clean energy future in this year's budget, including no monies to assist northern and first nations communities to switch from dirty polluting diesel fuel to cleaner sources of energy, something they desperately need.

The Liberals' skills development and innovation budget also makes no commitment for a just transition strategy for workers and communities for a cleaner energy economy. To the credit of the Alberta government, this is something that it is proceeding on with the workers of the province, including in the coal-fired power industry and for the oil sands industry. It is something that the Germans are pursuing with their workers.

If we are switching to different sources of development, it is very important that we also have a skills development and educational strategy, and an incentive strategy to support the workers to gain retraining or to relocate for new kinds of training. Certainly we see private entities in my own province. Electrical contractors themselves, through fees that they pay on their contracts, have set up a training program for electricians, including plug-ins for electrical cars and the installation of solar panels. We see nothing in the budget implementation bill to move forward on a strategy for a genuine and just transition towards a cleaner energy economy.

Those certainly would be measures that I would love to see added to the budget bill. The Liberals have said that they are open to amendments. Those would be very useful amendments, to lend greater credibility to their talk of balancing environmental and economic development. I look forward to questions.

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● (1250)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I would like to touch on something she mentioned at the start of her speech about the Liberals' twisted logic regarding omnibus bills.

When we ask the Liberals if they think this is an omnibus bill, they tell us not to worry because they have a solution. They say they will give the Speaker of the House the power to split omnibus bills into several separate bills.

The thing is, the Liberals are in government and could have done exactly that. They do not need the Speaker to split this bill into several bills. They are the ones who drafted it. If they do not want omnibus bills, why did they not simply choose not to make one? They are the ones who drafted it.

Would the member please comment on the Liberals' totally twisted logic when they say they do not want any more omnibus bills but just introduced one anyway?

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent and indeed an obvious question. Only today during question period, the government members said, "Oh well, we are going to let the Speaker decide if they could divide up omnibus bills to decide which committees they go to."

However, as I mentioned in my speech, the Liberals promised during the election that there would never be another omnibus bill. They also committed that they would create an independent office of the parliamentary budget officer, which would give us greater ability to hold the government accountable on spending. When the Liberals were in opposition, they spoke against the omnibus bills of the Conservative government, and they certainly spoke for creating an independent parliamentary budget officer. We see a certain level of hypocrisy here.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to ask another question, because I do not think I heard what my colleague was saying about the creation of the infrastructure bank, which is an important part of this bill.

Speaking of dividing up the bill, this is exactly the kind of measure that could be separated, so that parliamentarians could vote on that in one way and on other measures in a different way. The very principle of splitting a bill is about allowing parliamentarians to vote on each measure rather than having to vote on all of them as a whole.

What does my friend think of the infrastructure bank and the potential risks of privatizing our infrastructure? According to the bill, the mission of the infrastructure bank would be to fund projects that generate revenue. This means more user fees.

I wonder if my colleague could talk about that part of the bill, regarding the creation of the infrastructure bank. What are her thoughts on that?

● (1255)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, that is another excellent question from my colleague from Quebec.

I, too, am deeply concerned about the establishment of the infrastructure bank. I am sure I shared with many in the House today our shock when the government suggested that a mere \$15 billion for the establishment of the infrastructure bank, using taxpayers' dollars, is nothing to worry about. Perhaps that is small change to the Liberals, but it is not small change to the majority of people I represent.

There are also growing concerns among the public about the conflict of interest, with the very people who were consulted on the establishment of this bank who may in fact be the very persons who get contracts or loans from this infrastructure bank to initiate major projects.

I heard earlier from one of our Liberal colleagues about how committed she is and the need for affordable housing. We need more spaces in affordable child care. I do not think anyone will be going to the infrastructure bank to establish those projects.

I have met with the majority of the groups in my own city who are trying to provide affordable housing and housing for the homeless. We are in dire straits in our city. It would be nice if the government would take part of that \$15 billion and put it towards affordable housing and access to affordable child care.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the finance minister has a tradition that when he makes his first budget speech, he has a new pair of shoes. Since this is my first speech to the budget, I have decided to implement a new tradition and I have a new tie, which was created by Inuit artist Aoudla Pudlat from Cape Dorset and it is called "The Imperial Bird".

I am pleased to stand today to reflect on the budget measures our government is putting in place to carry out our plan for Canada.

In the brief time I have, I would like to highlight aspects of the budget that relate solely to the Canadian steel industry and the 22,000 Canadians who are direct employees along with 100,000 others indirectly employed in this fundamental sector of the Canadian economy.

There are 19 basic steel facilities in five provinces with annual sales of \$14 billion, a big number. Let me put it in terms of my city of Hamilton.

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ArcelorMittal Dofasco has a payroll of 5,000 employees in Hamilton whose average wage is \$75,000. Let us do the math. This is an injection into our city's economy every year of \$375 million, not including pensions and benefits. Furthermore, the company has never been busier. Thanks to advanced manufacturing innovations, it makes 450,000 tonnes of steel a year, which is more than twice the tonnage with less than half the employees than when I worked there years ago. This is world-class, environmentally sound, well-paid manufacturing second to none that supports Hamilton's middle class.

Hamilton's other steel plant, Stelco, is currently being restructured under the CCAA process, which allows it to continue operations and maintain employment. When this process concludes, Stelco's management is predicting a very positive future for its Hamilton operations, thanks in part to the measures we are introducing in budget 2017. These measures are intended to strengthen Canada's trade remedy systems by amendments to the Special Import Measures Act and related regulations, and I will describe them briefly.

On circumvention, domestic producers will be able to file a complaint regarding trade and business practices that are intended to avoid duties. The Canada Border Services Agency will investigate complaints and apply duties to goods that are found to have circumvented our regulations.

On scope, specific products can be investigated by border services to determine if they fall within the scope of a trade remedy measure.

On particular market situations, unfair trade often involves price distortions by exporting countries. I will give an example of how they can get around the rules. Sheet steel that would otherwise be subject to tariffs might be chemically treated with a boron coating, which would then allow the steel to be re-categorized as an alloy product and thus not subject to the duty.

Another way of circumventing Canadian tariffs is shipping Chinese coils to finishing mills in Vietnam. Re-rolling that material and shipping it to Canada from Vietnam allows the Chinese producer to avoid Canadian duties.

These are simple examples. The process can get very complicated when foreign currencies are manipulated to hide the true cost of exported products, so we have created the tools industry needs to fight these practices.

The trade remedies we have introduced have already had a profound effect on the steel industry in Canada. In Calgary, Tenaris has just reopened a manufacturing plant and is in the process of recalling about 100 unionized employees. In Grande Prairie, Tenaris is moving ahead with a \$20 million service centre, creating 20 jobs.

In testimony before our international trade committee, the company's representative stated that part of the reasons for these actions was the federal government's crackdown on dumping by countries like China that had depressed prices and forced layoffs and plant closures.

Sean Donnelly is president and CEO of ArcelorMittal Dofasco, chair of the Canadian Steel Producers Association, and a board member of the American Iron and Steel Institute. Here is what Sean had to say to our Standing Committee on International Trade:

Let me start by saying that ArcelorMittal Dofasco welcomes the Government of Canada's budget 2017 commitment to improve its ability to defend Canadian manufacturers against dumped and subsidized imports by implementing measures that effectively modernize the Canadian trade remedy system. These legislative and regulatory amendments will improve the enforcement of trade remedies, address the circumvention of duties, and better account for market and price distortions.

● (1300)

There is a very similar American perspective.

Thomas J. Gibson is president and CEO of the American Iron and Steel Institute. I met with Tom in Ottawa, and again recently in Washington, when I attended congressional hearings on the American steel industry. He said:

Congress recently passed legislation to improve enforcement at our borders to try to catch those who evade tariffs by deliberately mislabeling where the steel comes from, in addition to other clever tricks that are undermining the American steel industry....Congress gave the Commerce Department new tools last summer when it enacted legislation that made improvements to the trade remedy laws, and now it is critical that the department aggressively use them.

Budget 2017 also recognizes that labour unions have an important perspective to bring to trade remedy investigations. Therefore, regulatory amendments will be made to ensure unions have the right to participate as interested parties in trade remedy proceedings.

During my visit to Washington, I also heard from Tom Conway, the vice-president of the United Steelworkers, who acknowledged his Canadian guest and stated, "Buy America is about fighting our enemies and not our friends", in reference to Canadian unionized steelworkers.

As co-chair of the parliamentary all-party steel caucus, I can report to the House that planning is under way for a joint meeting of our caucus and the American congressional steel caucus sometime in the next couple of months. Our American counterparts have made it clear that they will be taking strong measures against dumping of foreign steel in the American market. They will be encouraged that Canada is following suit with the measures I have outlined to keep our trade policies aligned with our NAFTA partners.

Canada cannot be seen as an easy entry point for cheap foreign steel produced without regard to modern environmental standards, working conditions, and compensation. The language I heard at the steel congressional hearings was explicit. "We are at war with China", was the statement made by Ed Vore, who is the CEO of ArcelorMittal's tubular products division in Pittsburgh. The executives I met in Washington were aware of Canada's initiatives regarding trade remedies, which will go a long way toward ensuring a positive relationship in steel manufacturing between our two countries.

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The measures I have just outlined did not make many headlines. However, virtually every stakeholder in Canadian steel has responded in the most positive fashion, not only by the supportive comments but by the actions already taken, as shown by the Tenaris announcements in Alberta.

Of course I am happy for my city of Hamilton but also for Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Contrecoeur, Quebec, and every place in Canada within the steel supply chain. These were the measures big steel asked for, and these are the measures that we provided.

Budget 2017 also includes investments in automotive and aerospace. Our infrastructure investments in transit and transportation will require vast amounts of steel for projects all across Canada, from railcars to rebar, because steel is a basic building block of our nation, and our steelworkers make the best in the world, with the highest environmental standards.

My emphasis on the budget measures related to steel is in part to dispel the myth that this is an industry of the past, associated with rust belts, old manufacturing, spoiled environments, and lost jobs. The company I know best, my old employer, Dofasco, has been steadily hiring for the past five years, and 30% of the workforce joined the company in the past five years. Young people are getting jobs in steel.

In terms of investing in its facilities, Dofasco has already spent \$1.3 billion in the plant over the past two years, and another \$1.5 billion in the capital budget between now and 2018. These expenditures are in step with the government's creation of a national advanced manufacturing economic strategy plan that commits to increasing value-added exports by 30% by 2025 and the establishment of innovation superclusters.

Members of the House and Canadians need to know that Canadian steel is world class, innovative, and advanced manufacturing is providing wages, benefits, and opportunity for thousands of Canadians. It is our duty as a government to provide the legislative and regulatory tools that steel needs to survive and flourish. That is what we have done in budget 2017.

• (1305)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, it has been a pleasure to serve on the all-party steel caucus with the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Certainly, I would welcome the improvements to trade remedy provisions as a positive feature of the budget. Of course, the devil is in the details, and I hope the government follows through with enforcement on the good words in the budget.

I would like to ask about another aspect of the budget, which is the billions of dollars for infrastructure that other government members have mentioned during this debate. I would like to ask the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek whether there are any provisions in the budget that would encourage the use of that money to procure Canadian steel, rather than building infrastructure with steel imported from offshore. Something that has concerned me is the new Champlain Bridge in Montreal, which is a huge federal infrastructure project. It is only using 19% Canadian steel. I believe we can and should do much better than that.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his participation and interest. I would point out that in his city of Regina, EVRAZ has just been named to provide 75% of the Trans Mountain pipeline steel, which will go between Edmonton and Burnaby, British Columbia. That news came forward very recently.

There is a bit of complexity in that we have very balanced trade between Canada and the United States. The value of products imported and exported is almost to the dollar. As we go through the next several months of discussion over NAFTA and the relationship between Canada and the United States, we will hedge our bets on how that kind of proposal would actually go forward without upsetting the trade balance we currently have with our American friends.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, steel is very near and dear to my heart. As a mechanical engineering technologist, I have spent a lot of time in Canada's steel facilities.

Perhaps the member could comment a little further on the integrated supply chain for steel. Sault Ste. Marie is using coke and iron from the mines in the United States. Similar to the automotive industry, we cannot look at Canadian steel without having American content and vice versa.

• (1310)

Mr. Bob Bratina: Madam Speaker, that is profound insight into the overlying question of how we will advance with our American friends. I would point out for my friend from Guelph that the commerce secretary for President Trump is Wilbur Ross. He is a member of the board of ArcelorMittal. He knows better than anyone the integrated nature of our two countries with regard to steel.

As I mentioned earlier, the balance in trade, in dollar terms, is almost completely equal. Therefore, it will be interesting whether there are anymore explosive tweets that come out of these subjects. Once we dig into the details, we will find that we are really the best friends of American steel and vice versa. For example, the ability for us to exchange coal and iron ore between the two countries gives us a huge environmental advantage over countries like China, which pollutes the environment with even the transportation of the raw materials it needs to make its steel.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand on behalf of the 160,000 constituents in Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, the largest constituency in terms of population in the country, with Leduc-Nisku at the heart of it, the heart of Canada's energy sector as well. I want to talk a bit about that energy sector, because, as I look at budget 2017, there is significant concern in the sector and with our biggest competitor, the U.S., cutting red tape and taxes. The Liberal government, of course, continues to jack up taxes, making the Canadian energy sector less competitive.

Government Orders

I have a couple of quotes from experts in the sector. The first is from Tim McMillan, the president and CEO of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, who stated:

I am disappointed and I think it sends a bad signal and further puts us at a disadvantage in terms of the capital we are trying to attract from global markets compared to the U.S., which is our biggest competitor for that capital.

He went on to say:

The government is very concerned with the middle class. Our industry hires the middle class.

Successive Liberal budgets and policies have been devastating to the middle class in my riding of Edmonton—Wetaskiwin.

Jack Mintz from the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary had this to say:

I think this competitiveness issue is a huge issue for Canada coming down the road and I'm surprised they took actions right now on this when they will be needing to deal with a much bigger set of changes next year.... The U.S. is going in a completely different direction on carbon and major U.S. tax reform. That's in addition to the measures being taken on carbon in Alberta. You start adding it all up and it's not a healthy climate. Businesses are taking their money elsewhere.

This Liberal fiscal approach is of great concern to my constituents, with \$52 billion in deficit over the past two years, \$52 billion. I had the chance to host four round tables with constituents. More than 60 constituents came to the round tables during the last break. There were six main concerns that permeated the discussion at the round tables. Two of them were refugees and marijuana, but the other four were all financial concerns. Deficits and spending was one of them. Pipelines was another one. The carbon tax was another one. Seniors care and benefits was another one.

One of the questions that I ask at round tables is: For the \$52 billion in deficit spending that we have had over the two years, with no real end in sight, no plan to get back to balance, does anyone feel that he or she is better off? I would say that of the more than 60 people at my round tables, there was one couple who said yes, they were better off, but then they went on to explain that their life circumstances had changed and they were better off because of changes in their life circumstances. It was certainly not because of anything the Liberal government had done for them. Again I ask that question: Is there anybody in Canada who is really better off for this \$52 billion in deficit spending over the last two years?

One thing we do is look at history. History provides us a really good lesson in terms of where we are going under the current government. We can look at the previous Trudeau government back in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, when the prime minister of the day ran budget deficits in 14 out of 15 years over that course of time. The results of those deficits, of course, in the mid-1980s were that interest rates were so high in Canada and employment was a challenge in Canada. If we look at the result over the next nine years, the Mulroney years, while the government of the day pretty much spent what it brought in, the interest payments on the Trudeau debt were astronomical and provided some of the biggest deficits in Canadian history because of the debt that Trudeau ran up during those years.

We fast forward to 1993 when a new Liberal government came into power. What did it have to do? It had to cut transfer payments for social services, health care, and education. It cut spending across the board, cut international development spending, things that are

really important to people in Canada and abroad. They were devastating cuts. We remember the tough decisions the provincial government had to make in Alberta. The provincial government in Ontario and provincial governments across this country had to make very difficult decisions because \$35 billion in transfers were cut right out from underneath them for that important spending.

We fast forward to today and look at the current government. We take a lesson that down the road, someone is going to have to pay for this deficit. Down the road, difficult decisions are going to have to be made. Let us look at the demographics we are talking about when we are considering how those decisions are going to be made.

● (1315)

In the mid-1970s, there were seven people working in this country for every senior citizen. Today, that number is four. There are four people working for every senior citizen today. With the demographics changing, by 2030, we are going to have two and a half people working for every senior citizen. That is two and a half people paying the taxes and sharing the burden. Of course, seniors pay taxes as well, but in terms of people working before their senior years to pay the burden of this debt that is being racked up right now, it is going to be the younger generation who is going to pay for that. It is going to be our kids who are going to have to pay for that, much like the taxpayers in the mid-1990s had to pay for decisions made by the Trudeau government of the 1970s. Those cuts were devastating at the time.

If we are concerned about things like seniors care and benefits that my constituents brought up as one of the six issues that they are concerned about, for seniors living in a generation from now, having to face the cuts that are inevitable, given the unprecedented level of spending of the government, it is going to be tremendously difficult. Then the younger generation, the people who are just starting to vote now, are the ones who are going to have to pay the lion's share of the burden to pay off that debt. It is very concerning, to say the least.

Let us look at a couple of the other issues, such as the pipelines issue that my constituents bring up because it is very important. Let us take a look at energy east and, again, take a look at the perverse nature, I guess, in the sense of the government's decisions as they relate to the fiscal situation of the country. More than 600,000 barrels of oil come into Canada from outside Canada, from countries like the U.S., Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Algeria, and Angola. We have more than 600,000 barrels every single day coming into Canada from those countries by ships and by rail, instead of just having the political will to set in place a process that allows energy east to happen. It does not even require government spending. This is something that the private sector would build and the government just needs to get out of the way. If the government did that, we would see jobs come back to Alberta, jobs come back across the country, in terms of the building of the pipeline. We would see taxes being paid and revenues within the government increasing, not by raising the percentage, but just by creating wealth in the country. We would see transfers for things like health, social services, and education go up because of the impact of that. The government just needs to get out of the way.

Government Orders

I also want to talk for a second about something that is very personal for me. In all of this \$52 billion of deficit spending the government has done, it could not find \$3.8 million for a Canadian autism partnership. One in 68 Canadian children today is diagnosed with autism. It is a significant issue. If we think of an average family being four people, that is one in 17 Canadians living in a family with someone with autism.

We had an expert working group work for two years to establish a plan for this, report to the government with a budget ask that was incredibly modest, \$19 million over five years, \$3.8 million per year, and that budget ask was rejected. With \$52 billion in deficit spending, hundreds of millions of dollars in spending overall, \$3.8 million could not be found for some of the most vulnerable Canadians in our society. That is unconscionable. Something needs to be done about that.

I see that my time is winding up. I look forward to questions from my hon. colleagues. I am sure the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader will stand, as he usually does, and I look forward to his question.

* * *

• (1320)

POINTS OF ORDER

ADMISSIBILITY OF AMENDMENT TO MOTION REGARDING BILL C-4

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to respond briefly to the argument the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons made a few moments ago.

The motion before the House that was the subject of an amendment made by my friend, the member for Carleton, has nothing whatsoever to do with the content of the bill. In fact, there is no bill before this House. The motion before this House is to send a message to the Senate in response to a message which the Senate sent to this House regarding certain decisions made by the Senate.

The bill itself is no longer before this House. This House is not debating the bill. We are debating a motion by the government to send a message to the Senate and we are formulating the content of that message. It is the composition of that message that is before us, not the bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly appreciate the additional information from the member for Oxford. We will take it under advisement. We will look at the submissions that have been made so far on this issue and we will attempt to get back to the House as soon as we can.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member asked if there is anyone in Canada who is

better off. I actually wrote down the phrase when he asked that question, rhetorically, of course.

I can share with the House that, as I speak, there is \$58 million being invested in 24 first nations in Manitoba to prevent and address long-term drinking water advisories, and finally produce clean water for those indigenous communities to drink. Of these 24 projects, one is in the feasibility stage, 10 are in the design stage, and 13 are in the construction stage. These are critical investments toward our goal of ending all long-term drinking advisories in indigenous communities.

Does the hon. member think those 24 indigenous communities are better off?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, some of the youngest populations in Canada are on reserve. When we look at where the burden will be because of the \$52 billion in just two years in deficit that the government is running, the biggest burden will be on our younger people.

I would respond to the hon. member by saying when we look at the record, the historic levels of spending that the government is undertaking right now by borrowing money to do so, it will be the very people he is talking about who will pay the price down the road, because there will be a bill coming down the road. We just have to look at history, a former Trudeau government, to see what that price will be.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Edmonton—Wetaskiwin for his excellent comments and for his advocacy. His riding actually includes a lot of south Edmonton as well, so I thank him for his work for the city.

He is one of the greatest advocates that we have in our country, and certainly in this Parliament, for the issue of autism, and the cut to the support is disgraceful. I am wondering if the member could expand a bit on some of the work that could have been done with that money and how important it is to the community.

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concern that my colleague has always had, both privately and publicly, for families living with autism.

I am fortunate. My son Jaden is 21, and having grown up in Alberta, he has had solid support from the time he was two years old. However, the situation facing some families in this country depends on where they live. In some provinces, they know that their child has autism at two, but they cannot get a diagnosis for two years because they are on a wait list until the child is four. They cannot get treatment until the child is six. Certainly that is provincial jurisdiction.

What this Canadian autism partnership would have done, again for \$3.8 million a year in the context of a \$52 billion deficit, is bring experts together, renowned world-class experts who are right here in Canada, to advise governments in their jurisdiction on things like early intervention, education, housing, transitions and employment, all of those things that are real challenges for families living with autism, people living with autism across this country.

Again, we are talking about a minimal investment and two years of work by an expert panel that reported to the government on this, and it was rejected in the budget.

Private Members' Business

• (1325)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour and a privilege to rise today in this House on behalf of the citizens I represent in Saint Boniface—Saint Vital to share my thoughts on the budget.

I am happy to say that budget 2017 would deliver on the policy platform on which we were elected in October 2015. As important, it would deliver on what we have heard from Canadians over the last 18 months. We have done a lot of consultations, we have listened, and we are acting.

Let me say first that this budget is very good news. It is excellent news for the province I represent, the province of Manitoba. There are a number of initiatives that would benefit Manitoba as a whole. For example, budget 2017 would give Manitoba a major transfer of \$3.7 billion in 2017-18. That is an increase of \$148 million from the previous year, and it is the largest year-over-year increase since 2008. Members are never going to hear anyone in the premier's office or the Premier of Manitoba say those numbers, but they bear repeating. Budget 2017 would increase the transfer to Manitoba by \$148 million, the largest year-over-year increase since 2008.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada's investment in the province of Manitoba is not limited to these large transfers of \$3.7 billion. We are also going to make significant investments in clean technology in indigenous communities, our cities, our communities, and the Lake Winnipeg basins.

[English]

Within the \$3.7 billion transfer there would be important investments in clean technologies, in indigenous communities, in rural communities, in cities, of course, and in the Lake Winnipeg basin.

We would deliver results with the Canada infrastructure bank. The infrastructure bank would be an arm's-length organization that would work with provincial, territorial, municipal, indigenous, and private-sector investment partners to transform the way infrastructure is planned, funded, and delivered in Canada. Public dollars would go further and would be used more strategically, maximizing opportunities to grow the middle class while strengthening our economy in the long term. Canada's infrastructure bank would be responsible for investing at least \$15 billion over 11 years using loans, loan guarantees, and equity investments. These investments would be made strategically, with a focus on transformative projects connected to regional transit and transportation networks. We will continue to build strong communities using better public transit.

[Translation]

Public transit figures prominently in our budget. We will be making an investment that will help build strong communities, achieve greater economic efficiency, improve the quality of life, and ensure environmental sustainability.

[English]

The benefits of public transit are very clear: shorter commute times, less pollution, more time to spend with family and friends, and stronger economic growth. These are all well known and well

documented. Through the public transit infrastructure fund, budget 2017 would invest \$20.1 billion over 11 years through partnerships with the provinces and territories. In addition, the Canada infrastructure bank would invest at least \$5 billion in public infrastructure transit systems across Canada.

• (1330)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize to the member for Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital. I forgot to tell him that I would be interrupting him at a certain point because the House must proceed to the consideration of private members' business.

The member will have almost six minutes to finish his speech when the House resumes debate on this matter.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

NATIONAL SEAL PRODUCTS DAY ACT

The House resumed from April 5 consideration of the motion that Bill S-208, An Act respecting National Seal Products Day, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to this private member's bill. I want to begin by acknowledging the excellent work of my NPD colleague, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who is our critic on this file.

Bill S-208 seeks to designate May 20 as national seal products day. I will get into why that date was chosen a bit later. Beyond its symbolic nature, this bill seeks to provide significant support to certain communities, especially to people who earn their income from the seal hunt and for whom this might be a traditional practice.

People watching us on television might be wondering why on earth a member from east-central Montreal is rising to talk about the seal hunt. I must admit that there are not a lot of seals or seal hunting in my riding.

An hon. member: That we know of.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, yes, I better double-check.

However, it is important to me to rise because I want to show my solidarity with the communities and workers of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Magdalen Islands, and northern Quebec and Canada, as well as the Inuit and first nation peoples, to whom it is important to have a flourishing, balanced, sustainable, and cruelty-free seal hunting industry.

I know full well that this has been a controversial issue for years. It is a contentious issue, and emotions run high. However, I think we need to take an approach that is rooted in science, sustainable development, and support from the communities where seal hunting is an essential, traditional, and important practice.

Private Members' Business

The NDP has always believed that seal hunting could be done in a responsible, respectful, and sustainable manner. That is why we are proud to rise in support of this bill to designate a national seal products day.

We believe in seal hunting because, since the dawn of time, all human communities have used the natural resources available to them for sustenance, survival, and development. First we were gatherers, then we learned to farm the land, to fish, and to hunt the animals around us. In those days, there were few human beings on this immense planet, and their impact on the environment as a whole was minimal.

We have since come to understand that our very numbers sometimes put animal and plant species at risk. Unfortunately, species become extinct every year, often due to human activity.

We also know that it is possible to hunt and fish responsibly with the help of credible scientific assessments to ensure that stocks remain healthy, reproduce, and are not put at risk. That is the case for all fishing in Canada, and also for hunting. We hunt deer and caribou because we can set quotas. We can scientifically calculate the number of animals that can be harvested in a year while ensuring the survival of the species or herd in a given region. The process applies to almost all our hunting and fishing activities, and I am personally convinced, as are my NDP colleagues, that we could very easily do the same thing for the seal hunt.

• (1335)

We have to keep in mind that seals, particularly harp seals, are not threatened at all. Here are the facts. In 30 years, the harp seal population tripled. There are now between eight million and nine million harp seals, which is the most commonly hunted species. According to forecasts for 2030, this population will reach between 10 million and 16 million individuals. We have to do away with misconceptions, with images that captured the public's attention over the past few years, and offended or distressed some people. I will come back to that. I understand how they feel, but let us look at the facts. This species is thriving, sometimes to the detriment of other animals, such as our cod stocks and other fish that seals prey on.

The grey seal population has increased from 10,000 to 500,000, that is half a million, in 50 years. No additional protection is needed for either the harp seal or the grey seal. We can continue to hunt them responsibly and use the healthy products derived from them. We know that we can use their fur for boots, coats, hats, and sometimes even ties, which are proudly worn in the House of Commons. Seals are also a source of food, fuel, and health products. When researching my speech, I learned that there is a growing market for seal oil, which is very rich in Omega-3 fatty acids. There are many interesting and beneficial uses for all the products derived from the seal hunt.

I have something important to say to all those who are concerned about the seal hunt. Only humane practices are used. Let us remember when certain European celebrities visited northern Canada to capitalize on this issue. Denis Longuépée, president of the Magdalen Islands Sealers Association, a man who is aptly named for a hunter, said that we would never be able to get rid of that image because, even though white coat seals have not been hunted for 25 years, people are still using that image. He added that we need to try to convince people to buy and try seal products.

It is important to remind anyone who is concerned about cruelty to animals that white coat seals are no longer hunted. The practice has

stopped. Seal hunting is respectful, sustainable, and science-based, and it can be done without people always reminding us of that old image, which is no longer even relevant.

It is important to remind people of this because, unfortunately, that shocking and distressing image has managed to influence policy-makers on the other side of the Atlantic. Indeed, the European Union has made decisions that we do not agree with. In August 2010, it decided to ban Canadian seal products. The structure of the European Union is very interesting. It is something I have studied, something that I follow very closely. The European Union generally makes good decisions; that one was not so good.

As parliamentarians, as the representatives of all those communities and the workers who make a living from the seal hunt, we need to take a stand. Creating a national seal products day would send a clear message to everyone, here in Canada and in the European Union. We need to continue to engage in dialogue with the European Union to reopen that market.

• (1340)

[English]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today and support a bill that has been put forward in the House of Commons by my colleague, the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, which is, in essence, central coastal Newfoundland.

Bill S-208 is an important bill for all of us who have lived a traditional life, both commercially and non-commercially, around the sealing industry. The people in my riding of Labrador, both indigenous and non-indigenous, have engaged in the seal industry for centuries. Throughout my family, right back to my great-great grandfather's day, the seal was a very important part of survival, both from a cultural perspective and an earning value perspective, for the family. It is a way of life for us still today, as we eat seal and wear seal.

We feel that the federal government has an obligation to protect and support Canadian heritage activities, whether that be farming, fishing, or in this case, seal harvesting. We are asking members of the House of Commons to support that position.

Bill S-208 is just one way for the federal government to stand by its commitment to indigenous people and non-indigenous people and to those whose economies are affiliated with the seal industry.

While foreign governments and well-funded activist groups from away, and at home in Canada, have dealt a significant blow to this industry over the years and have created a terrible image of the Canadian seal harvest, we have an obligation to ensure that we make things right and point out the unfair publicity that has surrounded the industry.

Private Members' Business

It has been more than 30 years since regulations started to change in the seal industry. The images today of white coats and baby seals are still used by those who are trying to make a cash grab on the backs of those in the industry. However, it has been more than 30 years since that has occurred in the sealing industry in Canada. It is one of the most humane industries one could ever partake in, and the people who perpetuate a different image are indeed, as my colleague said, fraudulent in their intentions and fraudulent in their information.

What is happening in the industry today is that their negative propaganda has done harm. It has done harm to the Inuit people, who are dependant on seals for food security in their communities, and it has done harm to the rural and coastal communities of Canada.

For Labradorians, and for Inuit all over Canada, the seal harvest is part of our lives. It is the cultural core of who we are as people, and it is the mainstay of our diet.

It is really hard to explain to Canadians who have not been part of the north shore of Quebec and the Magdalen Islands' cultural industry, or that of Nunavut, Nunavik, Labrador, or coastal Newfoundland, what it means from a cultural and industry perspective, but I am going to attempt to do that. I will attempt to do it through my own story, as one person.

I grew up in a small, remote, rural community of predominantly indigenous Inuit people. When I grew up in the community, our clothes back then were all of seal. They were all hand sewn and handmade by my mother, my grandmothers, and my aunts. It was made from the seals my dad and my grandfather would catch. Not only was it the main source of food and protein for our family but it was a main source of clothing as well. Still today we continue in that vein, despite the negative publicity toward us.

We are not a society of people that judge others based on their culture. We do not judge them based on what they eat or what their cultural practices are, nor should they judge us, as northern and coastal people.

● (1345)

We know that sealing is more than a cultural industry and significant industry to the people of the north and coastal regions in Canada. It is also a species which is impacting the entire fisheries ecosystem in Atlantic Canada. Those who ignore the impact of the seal on other species are blinding themselves in a cloud; they do not want to be peeping out at the real story.

The real story is that in coastal areas like in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have seen the seal population growing at a rapid rate. We are no longer harvesting at the levels we once did because the commercial industry has been eroded, and because the international markets have been buying into the fraud and the negative propaganda of money-grabbing socialite groups. It is because of those things that our whole ecosystem is out of balance.

We hear it from those who work in the fishing industry. They are seeing a huge depopulation of capelin and cod. I live in a community that has a river running through it, where I fish for salmon with a rod from the rock just down the lane from my house. I can look out and see seals in that river, something my grandfather never saw. The

animals are starving. They are looking for a food supply. They are starving, and they are going wherever they can to find food.

Seals have become overpopulated. They have become a huge predator to every other fish species in the ocean. Seals today are eating more fish in the Atlantic waters around the coastal communities and the ridings like the one I represent than any fishery could take in 10 years, based on the quota levels we currently have.

The seal industry is important in many ways. It is important to the people who live there and who have culturally used this animal for survival, and continue to do so today, as a main source of food and clothing. It is important to the ecosystem of the fisheries habitat that we continue to harvest, to ensure that balance is there and that communities are able to have sustainable fisheries, in seal, cod, salmon, shrimp, crab, and capelin. Right now the seal is overpopulated and has become a predator to every other species.

It is not uncommon for any of us in those communities to get emails and photos from fishermen, who, in just cleaning a seal, are opening it up to find its stomach filled with baby crab. This is in areas where the crab population is declining at huge rates year over year.

However, through this bill, we do want to point out the importance of seal products in Canada, in all of our communities, and what that means as a supplement to the income of people who live there. When we look at traditional crafts from northern and Arctic regions, especially in Nunavut—I think my colleague from Nunavut spoke on this bill a couple of weeks ago in the House of Commons—we can see the tremendous dependence on seal products to be able to run small businesses, to earn a living, and to build on investments in those communities. It has been a way of life for them, as harvesting, farming, and fishing have been a way of life for anyone else in this country.

We feel that this bill is consistent with our commitment to renewing our relationship with indigenous people who depend on this industry, as I have outlined. I would like to remind everyone in this House, and anyone who will listen, that Canada's seal harvest is one of the most humane industries. It is well regulated and sustainable. Seals are overly abundant and healthy in Canada; there is absolutely no doubt about that.

I want to assure all my colleagues of the importance of supporting this bill, and of the importance of marketing seal, as a product and as an industry, for Canadians who have depended upon it traditionally for many years.

● (1350)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the private member's bill put forward by the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame. It is also an honour to work with the member on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

I want to recognize the message the member for Labrador just spoke to, that being the importance of the seal harvest and seal products to those communities and their traditions and heritage.

Private Members' Business

I appreciate this opportunity to support the member and Bill S-208, which seeks to designate May 20 as national seal products day.

Canada is known as a melting pot for cultures from around the world. This is something we can be proud of. While we Canadians can be proud of how that melting pot is always changing, we should also be proud of how we developed as a country, a country that is continuing to grow and prosper from the ability to sustainably harvest and market our natural resources, resources such as our wood products, although that market is somewhat hindered right now; our minerals; our fisheries; and of course, the resource that was originally responsible for Canada's early development, our fur products. Those fur products included beaver, muskrat, marten, and of course, seal. All of these species have been harvested sustainably, and we continue to have healthy, viable populations. In fact, some seal populations are now at historic levels.

Seal products are much more than fur or pelts. They are a high protein product for our tables, and they provide top omega 3 oils for health care products, which many remote maritime communities rely on for their livelihoods. Without them, many of those coastal communities would dwindle and perhaps die.

What is really significant is that with the loss of those communities would be the loss of a big part of our Canadian heritage, a heritage we need not be ashamed of, a heritage that has continued for hundreds of years, sustainably and continuously. It allowed the early residents of this continent to live here. It allowed early European settlers to immigrate and build better lives for their families than they might have had in their homelands. It is a heritage that is truly part of Canada.

In considering this legislation, I reflected on another bill, a successful bill that recognized how important our outdoor-oriented heritage is in Canada, and that was Bill C-501, which passed in 2014. It was introduced by Rick Norlock, the member from Northumberland—Quinte West. That legislation established the third Saturday in September as National Hunting Trapping and Fishing Heritage Day, a day to recognize, as this bill would, the importance of these activities in the development and survival of this great nation of ours.

While many members of the House may never have had the opportunity, and I might say enlightenment, of taking part in any of these amazing activities, I believe that all members can see how these activities and the products derived from them have played an important role and should be recognized nationally. Without that recognition, we risk losing not only the significance of hunting, trapping, fishing, and sealing but we risk losing those communities on our coasts and in our hinterlands that are so dependent on the products that can be obtained in a sustainable way.

I would like to take a few minutes to share some of my thoughts and my experiences in participating in some of these heritage activities. Although I have not participated in a seal harvest, I have had the incredible experience of being out in the wild pitting myself against the elements, pitting myself against the instincts and senses of the fish and game species that are so abundant in Canada.

● (1355)

Anti-use groups will try to diminish what we do and how we survive as Canadians because they want to end our legal activities. However, because of my participation in these activities, I will put myself up against them any day. These activities have enabled me to experience what really goes on out there. They have allowed me to put food on my table and to do so sustainably. I have learned that the best way to value and build appreciation and continued recognition of our fish and wildlife resources is to be immersed in it, partaking in the activities of fishing, hunting, trapping, and sealing, something many opponents will never get the chance to experience and will never understand the value of being there, touching it, and experiencing it first-hand.

I admire the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame for his initiative in asking for recognition of the value and the importance of seal products to our indigenous communities, our coastal communities, and the individuals who retain their sustenance and livelihood from seal products. We need to continue these roles and the importance of this. I truly admire him for putting this forward, not just on behalf of the residents of his area on the east coast, but for the importance of similar activities such as hunting, trapping, and fishing across the country.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not make special mention today. I would like to take the opportunity to wish my loving wife Linda a happy 38th anniversary.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will also extend my congratulations, and happy anniversary.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to follow my colleague from British Columbia in support of Bill S-208, put forward by the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, the illustrious chair of the fisheries committee.

I, too, serve on that committee. In fact, I have been on the fisheries committee ever since I became a member of Parliament, nearly seven years ago, and it has been a great committee to be on. Not that long ago, the chair talked about how many reports the committee had put out, 10 reports so far since this Parliament began. We have a very productive, interesting, and significant committee.

I very strongly support this bill. I represent a large rural area in Manitoba, and Manitoba is a coastal province. There are seals in Churchill in Hudson Bay. We do not seal hunt, but it is a coastal province.

For a prairie boy who grew up hunting, fishing and being the ultimate romantic when it comes to the outdoors, many years ago I got my hands on a book by George Allan England called, *The Greatest Hunt in the World*. He was on Captain Kean's boat in the 1920s and went on a seal hunt himself. As I read this direct account of the seal hunt, I could not imagine the toughness, the bravery, and the sheer guts it took for those men to go out on the ice every spring to harvest seals.

Private Members' Business

Canada's seal hunt is sustainable, and previous speakers have talked about the sustainability of it. Unfortunately, Canada's seal hunt has been the target of very unfair and fraudulent campaigns by the animal rights movement, led by groups like Animal Justice Canada, International Fund for Animal Welfare, and so on. It is clear that the sole purpose of these anti-sealing groups is to raise funds for themselves, and the collateral damage to coastal communities has simply been staggering.

A witness at the aboriginal affairs committee not that long ago talked about the increase in suicide rates in some Inuit communities, partly attributed to the collapse of the seal hunt. These people do not want to save cuddly animals. These people are a danger to rural and remote communities. The seal hunt is the canary in the coal mine. As somebody who has fought the animal rights movement and the people who want to shut down communities like the one I represent, the seal hunt, the canary in the coal mine, the tip of the iceberg, pick a metaphor, whether it is anti-logging, anti-trapping, anti-hunting, anti-mining, and, quite frankly, anti-oil and gas, it is the rural communities that bear the brunt of these campaigns. One of the reasons I became a member of Parliament was to protect and defend rural communities. I have had experiences fighting the good fight on all these issues.

Interestingly enough, again going back to the animal rights movement and the animal rights groups, these people do not care about cuddly animals. They want an end to all animal use, farming, ranching, trapping, and sealing of course, and sealing is the easiest target. However, if we look at all their websites, they also want an end to animal-based medical research. I do not know if members in the House realize it, but when I met with the Heart and Stroke Foundation some time ago, I asked point blank how much of the cardiac research was done on animals and it was 60%. Again, these anti-animal use campaigns can be extremely harmful.

I will also talk about the unfairness of countries that ban seal products. The European ban was completely uncalled for. It is easy for another country to point fingers at another jurisdiction and pay no political price for it, while being made to look like people who care about the environment. The U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act prevents seal products from entering the U.S., no matter how abundant seals are.

• (1400)

The animal rights movement caused a decrease in the seal harvest, and as colleagues talked about a minute ago, the number of harp seals has increased dramatically, from 1.8 million in 1970 to about 7.4 million now; and grey seals, from 13,000 in 1970 to 505,000 now. There are varying estimates, but the seals consume between 10 and 15 times what the east coast fleet harvests. It is quite clearly established that the high grey seal populations are preventing a recovery of the gulf cod.

Not that long ago, our fisheries committee submitted two reports to Parliament, one on Atlantic salmon and one on northern cod. In both studies, the seals were implicated in the decline of the Atlantic salmon in particular, and in the prevention of the recovery of the cod as well. Both committee reports recommended an expanded seal harvest, done humanely but expanded, to reduce the numbers of

these seal species to improve the populations of Atlantic salmon and cod.

Nobody wants to wipe out the seals. However, I think it is our duty as human stewards of this earth to restore a balance that is completely out of whack right now.

I had the honour many years ago of doing work in the eastern Arctic, around Southampton Island, on Arctic char, and I had the honour of living with an Inuit family. I participated in a seal hunt and a walrus hunt. I have had a lot of experience in the outdoors, but I have had some Arctic experience. I do know what it is like to plunge one's hand into a freshly killed walrus and experience the joy and exuberance of the hunt when one is successful. It was an experience that I will cherish. I have eaten raw seal, raw walrus, and I found the tastes interesting, to say the least. It can be good.

I am very pleased, as well, to see an increase in demand for seal products, the seal oil, the high levels of omega 3. We have companies that are exploiting this. I applaud my colleague and the colleagues from all parties who support our traditions of sealing, hunting, trapping, and fishing. Many of us belong to an organization called the outdoor caucus, and I see a number of members wearing an outdoor caucus pin.

I want to finish up with the tale of Bill C-246. As we know, a Liberal member of Parliament introduced a private member's bill that many of us viewed as a closet animal rights bill. I was very pleased to see that many Liberal members of Parliament, and almost all Conservative members of Parliament, worked very hard to defeat that particular bill. We motivated people from all across the country to build a coalition of sealers, trappers, hunters, anglers, and medical researchers, who realized the implications of that particular bill.

While I must thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his speech, and I listened with great interest to it, I would note that almost all of the NDP caucus voted for Bill C-246, except for one, the member for Kootenay—Columbia. I do not say this to be mean, in any sense of the word, but it is very important that we, as members of Parliament, stand on principle to protect our communities and the people who hunt, trap, fish, and harvest seals.

I must also say that sealing is largely a rural industry, but we have a lot of people who live in cities who love to hunt, fish, and trap. Again, I want to compliment my colleague for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, a Montreal area member of Parliament, who has chosen to throw his support behind the bill for a national seal products day.

In conclusion, I am very proud to support the bill. I am proud to serve with my colleague on the fisheries committee. I look forward to the bill being passed and being a very great help to the sealing industry, now and into the future.

Private Members' Business

• (1405)

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I forget, I want to wish my colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap and his wife a very happy anniversary, as he ended his speech by wishing his wife a happy anniversary. As my colleague from Spadina—Fort York said, it was certainly sealed with a kiss.

Nevertheless, I want to thank my hon. colleagues who spoke here today, and everyone who has supported this at second reading, as we now go into a vote on third reading.

Several of the issues that were brought up are quite germane to a seal products day, simply because it all ties into not just an ecosystem in its natural sense but an ecosystem of the economy as well. In many cases, many northern communities depend on this particular harvest to not only further their culture but also the economy. That is a very important part of it.

I was going to talk briefly about the fraudulent activities of some animal rights groups, but I think my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa encapsulated it quite well when he talked about how animal rights groups get it wrong, so I will leave it at that.

Some of the themes brought forward by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie were quite well done, and had not been brought up prior to his speaking, so I just want to touch on some of those.

A sustainability element is always built into the seal harvest that we partake in. The problem now is that the population has grown so much, 10 million harp seals and the doubling of the grey seal population in just a few years, as my friends from the Maritimes can attest to from what we have seen in the study from the fisheries committee. Many jurisdictions around the world are partaking in the cull or downsizing of these populations to provide balance to the ecosystem, as my friend from Manitoba pointed out. He also pointed out in our fisheries committee studies with respect to the Atlantic salmon and northern cod how this too shall come to pass, when we talk about the declining seal population, that we may have to embark on in order to bring some balance back into that ecosystem.

This is about seal products and products that are gaining notoriety around the world. There are many shops now on the east coast of this country, not just in Newfoundland and Labrador but also in eastern Quebec and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, for example, where the sale of these products are going ahead, including the product that I am wearing right now, which actually belongs to my hon. colleague from Nunavut. I want to thank him for allowing me to wear his clothes.

Nevertheless, I want to point out that my friend from Nunavut also talked about the cultural significance. I think in many cases around the world when import bans are imposed on these products, as my colleague from Manitoba pointed out, they seem to gloss over the cultural significance of this as they seem to forget that the cultural significance is also tied into the economic well-being of that particular area. In other words, countries that say they will ban these products will have exemptions for cultural references or cultural ceremonies. Part of cultural references and ceremonies is the ability

to partake in commerce for products, particularly with respect to fur and other products.

PhocaLux is a sealing operation in my riding, in the community of Fleur de Lys, that is now finding there is a greater market in seal oil than fur. It promotes and sells both because it seeks out full utilization of the animal. However, in parts of Europe seal oil was very popular before the ban came into place, and it is now achieving markets in Southeast Asia, which is another element that is a big part of this.

In conclusion, I am thankful to the originator of this idea. This bill originated in the Senate with Madam Céline Hervieux-Payette. I would like to end by thanking Céline for doing this. She is now retired; however, she can rest easy in retirement knowing that I truly believe she has done a noble service by providing a Canadian-made seal products day.

• (1410)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to, again, mention the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap's anniversary.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that my husband and I had our 35th anniversary on Monday. Although we could not be together, we know that our hearts are there, and we will make it up when we get home.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Private Members' Business

An hon. member: Nay.

In my opinion the yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

●(1415)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 2:15 p.m., this House stands adjourned until next Monday, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:15 p.m.)

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