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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 20, 2017
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT, 2017

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-59, An Act respecting national security matters.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table at this time, in both official languages, a charter statement with respect to Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters.

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 35th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, entitled “A Third Interim Report in Response to the Chief Electoral Officer’s Recommendations for Legislative Reforms Following the 42nd General Election”.

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

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, entitled “Canada’s Federal Regional Development Agencies Supporting Businesses, Sectors, Individuals and Communities: A Summary of the Testimony”.

I want to add that this will be the last report for the two analysts, Dylan Gowans and Florian Richard, because they are leaving the Library of Parliament to go back to university. I want to thank them

for their tremendous efforts over the last year, and their chief, June Dewetering, for working so hard with them as well.

This is a report without recommendations. It is a summary of what the regional development agencies had to say.

[Translation]

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled “Aviation Safety in Canada”.

[English]

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

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security concerning Bill S-231, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code (protection of journalistic sources).

[English]

If you would allow me, I would like to thank the members of my committee for the herculean task of doing this in just 10 days, as well as the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for sponsoring it in the House.

I would also like to thank the following people for the herculean task of getting this bill done in nine days: the clerk, Jean-Marie David; the legislative clerk, Philippe Méla; the analysts of the committee, Tanya Dupuis and Dominique Valiquet; and my staff person, Jake Eidinger.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendment.

Routine Proceedings

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs disagreed with some portions of the third interim report that was presented earlier this morning. We are offering supplemental dissenting conclusions, for example on the foreign financing provisions, with further recommendations that we are encouraging to ensure fair, effective, and transparent regulation and enforcement of third party electoral activities and finances, as an example.

I am tabling our dissenting opinions in both official languages, and call upon the Minister of Democratic Institutions to take action on our supplementary report.

* * *

● (1010)

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That pursuant to Standing Order 111.1, the House approve the appointment of Charles Robert as the Clerk of the House of Commons.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1045)

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

*(Division No. 338)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brousseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Carr

Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chan
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseau
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khouiry	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garrison
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauson (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacGregor
Malcolmson	Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	Morneau
Moore	Mulcair
Morrissey	Nantel
Murray	Ng
Nassif	Oliphant
O'Connell	Ouellette
O'Regan	Pauzé
Paradis	Peterson
Peschisolido	Philpott
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Picard	Quach
Poissant	Ramsey
Qualtrough	Rioux
Rankin	Rodriguez
Robillard	Rudd
Romanado	Saganash
Ruimy	Saini
Sahota	Samson
Sajjan	Sansoucy
Sangha	Scarpaleggia
Sarai	Serré
Schulte	Sheehan
Shanahan	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sorbara
Sohi	Stetski
Spengemann	Tabbara
Stewart	Tassi
Tan	Trudeau
Thériault	Trudel
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Weir	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj

Routine Proceedings

Young

Zahid — 200

[Translation]

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Albrecht
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Krniec	Kusie
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Sorenson
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 79	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1050)

[Translation]

PETITIONS

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the riding of Montarville, whose citizens signed this petition in both official languages in support of women and girls in the world's poorest countries who need education.

[English]

It is a combined effort of two non-profit, non-partisan organizations that want to campaign in one action. The first raises public awareness and educates policy-makers about the importance of smart and effective policies and programs that are saving the lives of millions of people living in the world's poorest countries. The second engages in grassroots and direct advocacy with policy-makers and key influencers in support of such policies and programs.

Access to good education for girls improves health and economic outcomes for women, their children, and their households and reduces the spread of violence. By presenting this petition, I hope to motivate all my colleagues to do likewise. Together, we are one.

KATHRYN SPIRIT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today. The first has to do with the infamous *Kathryn Spirit*, which has been languishing in Lake Saint-Louis at Beauharnois since 2011. The petitioners are calling on the federal government to ensure that the shipwreck is dismantled in a safe manner that meets all environmental standards.

MARINE ACTIVITY AND RECREATIONAL BOATING

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): The second petition I wish to present has been signed by more than 200 people and relates to the regulation of marine activities and recreational boating, which falls under federal jurisdiction. The legislative and regulatory framework focuses on safety and minimizing interference to navigation, but disregards environmental factors such as waterways and shoreline degradation, quality of life, social conflicts between different groups of users, noise control, and public safety, for example. Local governments do not have the authority or the means to effectively address those situations. The petitioners therefore call on the federal government to delegate certain regulatory powers to local municipalities and to streamline and facilitate the process to allow municipalities to apply for boating restrictions on certain waterways.

LOCAL FOOD

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): The third and final petition I am presenting has to do with local food and calls on the Government of Canada to develop a pan-Canadian strategy for local food. It also calls on the Department of Public Works and Government Services to adopt a policy for purchasing locally grown food to support our farmers all across Canada, who together provide one out of every eight jobs. Given that there are 48,000 federal facilities, there could be 48,000 cafeterias. If the government were to make an effort and lead by example, we could support our farmers immensely.

[English]

FIREARMS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring the attention of the House to an issue that is of major concern to the firearms community in my constituency, and it is certainly a concern that I share. That is the issue of the lack of certainty and consistency around the classification of firearms.

The petitioners in this case want to bring the attention of the House to some of the things that have happened with respect to the 10/22 magazine and, in general, the reality that we see. Often, the RCMP reclassifies firearms because there is a lack of definition in the law or in regulation about what constitutes a variant. The petitioners call specifically on the House to remove the power of the RCMP to arbitrarily make classification decisions with respect to firearms.

Routine Proceedings

This is a rule of law issue. I know that members in the House may have different opinions with respect to how firearms should be classified, but we should all be in favour of clear, consistent, and understandable regulations so firearms owners know what the classification is and so there is not a situation of a firearm being in one classification one day and then being switched the next day to a different classification, immediately removing the right of people to continue to possess their property in the way that they could the previous day.

There needs to be clarity and consistency. This is a major concern for firearms owners, as it should be to all Canadians. I present this petition for the consideration of the House.

● (1055)

TAXATION

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, firearms owners are not the only people who want to be consulted on reclassification for no reason.

I am pleased to present a petition signed by campers who stayed at St. Clair Shores Campground in Stoney Point, Ontario, a place for beautiful lakeside camping in the riding of Chatham-Kent—Leamington. The petitioners are calling upon the government to treat campgrounds with five or fewer full-time year-round employees as small businesses and tax them as such.

Also, Glenrock Cottages and Trailer Park in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, on the sandy shorelines of Lake Nipissing in the riding of Nickel Belt, calls on the government to ensure that campgrounds with fewer than five full-time year-round employees are still treated as small businesses and taxed as small businesses.

[*Translation*]

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the indigenous spirit of my people, I am presenting a petition on the protection of animals after disasters and emergencies. The petition seeks to ensure that during disasters the government provides assistance for animals, who are like family to us.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by hundreds of Canadians across the country who are calling on the Government of Canada to take action to protect Falun Gong practitioners, especially with regard to the illegal organ transplants occurring in China. The petition calls on the Canadian government to ask the Chinese government to conduct an independent investigation into these practices. The petition also calls on the government to actively discourage Canadians from seeking organs from China and to reject visas and immigration applications from anyone who may have been directly or indirectly linked to these illegal transplant practices. In addition, the petition calls on the Government of Canada to help and support Falun Gong practitioners, who are being persecuted in China and around the world.

HIV-AIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present two petitions.

The first is on AIDS.

[*English*]

The petitioners from my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands call for a national AIDS strategy based on the proven principle of treatment as prevention.

BOTTLED WATER

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from residents throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands calling for Parliament to discontinue the purchase of bottled water for personal use in any federal government institutions when potable water is available.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition that highlights that, when the government passed legislation a year ago on assisted suicide and euthanasia, the government promised that no health care professionals would be forced to participate against their conscience in assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The petition goes on to say that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is using coercion, intimidation, and other forms of pressure against physicians who do not want to participate.

The petitioners are calling on Parliament to enact, in the Criminal Code, protection of conscience for physicians and health care institutions from coercion and intimidation, which is currently happening in this country. Our freedoms need to be protected.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present this morning on behalf of law-abiding target shooters, hunters, trappers, farmers, and collectors who feel that they are not properly represented on the Canadian firearms advisory committee set up by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

The petitioners feel that all the individuals in the new membership of the Canadian firearms advisory committee, which was announced on March 3, 2017, have either publicly stated that they are in favour of stricter gun control or are in fact members of the Coalition for Gun Control. Only two members of this committee have a firearms background.

The petitioners are calling for more fair representation.

● (1100)

TAXATION

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling e-petition no. 818, initiated by my constituent Tony Fairfield, which includes 599 signatures.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to make an immediate and public commitment to not pursue the elimination of the tax exemption for employer-sponsored health and dental benefit plans, now and into the future, at any time throughout the mandate of the government.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to two specific facts: the February 7, 2017, vote in which every single member on the government caucus side voted against an opposition motion calling on the government to abandon any plans to tax federal dental and health benefits, and 24 million Canadians currently have access to health care through private employer-sponsored plans.

The 599 petitioners in this e-petition are specifically calling on the government, if it has future plans to introduce such taxation, to do so by calling for it during an election cycle.

COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal war on history continues to prompt many petitions to my office, and I have a raft of them to present today.

The petitioners are very proud Canadians. They are proud of their country's history. Commemorative medals have been issued on many occasions in Canada's history to recognize outstanding Canadians who have made significant contributions to their community and country. This kind of medal has been awarded on the occasions of Confederation in 1867, our diamond jubilee of Confederation in 1927, the centennial in 1967, and most recently on the 125th anniversary of Confederation in 1992. However, as part of the Liberal war on history, the program to present medals such as these, which was very well advanced, was unfortunately cancelled.

The petitioners call upon the government to reconsider that decision and actually proceed with a proper medal for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

The petitioners come from Winnipeg, Manitoba; Iroquois Falls, Ontario; Yarmouth, Nova Scotia; Acadia, Nova Scotia; Wedgeport, Nova Scotia; Tuskent, Nova Scotia; South Ohio, Nova Scotia; Nepean, Ontario; Ottawa, Ontario; Woodbridge, Ontario; Toronto, Ontario; Mississauga, Ontario; Markham, Ontario; Keswick, Ontario; Scarborough, Ontario; Whitby, Ontario; Pickering, Ontario; Ajax, Ontario; Stockholm, Saskatchewan; Grayson, Saskatchewan; Wapella, Saskatchewan; Whitewood, Saskatchewan; Esterhazy, Saskatchewan; Redvers, Saskatchewan; St. Louis, Prince Edward Island; and Tignish, Prince Edward Island.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to respect tradition, recognize deserving Canadians, and reverse the decision to cancel the commemorative medal for the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the supplementary response to Question No. 1025, originally tabled on June 16, and the government's response to Question No. 1027 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1025—**Ms. Jenny Kwan:**

With regard to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), since the changes made to the refugee determination system in 2012: (a) how many cases have come before the IRB, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the refugee protection division (RPD), (iv) through the refugee appeal division (RAP); (b) of the cases heard at the IRB, how many were 'legacy cases', broken down (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the RPD, (iv) through the RAP; (c) what was the average length of delay for a legacy case to be heard, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the RPD, (iv) through the RAP; (d) what is the total funding provided to the IRB by the government, broken down (i) year, (ii) purpose; (e) how much internal funding has been shifted within the IRB to process 'legacy cases', broken down (i) year, (ii) area funding was shifted from; (f) how many 'legacy cases' have reached final decisions at the IRB, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the RPD, (iv) through the RAP; (g) of the remaining 'legacy cases', what average length of time the case has been before the IRB, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the RPD, (iv) through the RAP; (h) does the government have a plan in place to eliminate the backlog of 'legacy cases'; (i) in what year is it expected that 'legacy cases' will be eliminated; (j) how many instances have there been of 'legacy cases' having hearings cancelled, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the RPD, (iv) through the RAP; (v) rationale for cancellation; (k) what is the average length of time between a 'legacy case' hearing cancellation and the hearing being rescheduled, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) through the RPD, (iv) through the RAP; (l) how many instances have there been of 'legacy case' hearings being rescheduled multiple times, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) number of hearing cancellations; (m) how many citizenship applications have been suspended due to the cessation of refugee protection provision, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant, (iii) duration of period of suspension; (n) how many citizenship applications are being prosecuted due to the cessation of refugee protection provisions, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant; (o) since 2009 how many cessation cases have been initiated pursuant to IRPA s. 108(2) at the Immigration and Refugee Board in total, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of citizenship of person concerned; (p) how many cessation cases are being investigated in total, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of origin of applicant; (q) what percentage of citizenship application suspensions are triggered by or related to cessation issues, broken down (i) year, (ii) country of citizenship of origin of applicant; (r) what is the average length of time it takes for a cessation case pursuant to IRPA s. 108(2) from its initiation by the Minister of IRCC, broken down by (i) year, (ii) country of citizenship of person concerned, (iii) method of determination; (s) what is the number of currently unresolved cessation cases pursuant to IRPA s. 108(2) that are pending before the RPD, broken down by year of initiation by the Minister of IRCC; and (t) what is the average time that currently unresolved cessation cases pursuant to IRPA s. 108(2) that are pending before the RPD, broken down by year of initiation by the Minister of IRCC?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1027—**Ms. Jenny Kwan:**

With regard to the Canada Border Services Agency and since 2009: (a) how many cessation cases in total are begin investigated but are not yet resolved, broken down by (i) year in which investigation was started, (ii) country of citizenship of person concerned; and (b) how many cessation cases have been investigated and resolved, broken down by (i) year in which investigation was started, (ii) country of citizenship of person concerned, (iii) outcome of investigation?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time, please.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on June 8, 2017 by the honourable member for Winnipeg Centre concerning the right of members to use indigenous languages in proceedings in the House of Commons.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre for having raised this important matter.

[English]

The member began by explaining that, despite having provided documentation to interpretation services 48 hours in advance, simultaneous interpretation was not provided when he made a statement in nehiyo, the Cree language, on May 4, 2017. Unable to be understood by his fellow parliamentarians and those viewing the proceedings, he felt that he had been effectively silenced and his privileges violated. The member asked for not only the right to use indigenous languages in the proceedings of the House but also for minimal resources to enable him to participate and interact fully with other members in the proceedings and them with him in turn.

● (1105)

[Translation]

The issue raised by the member for Winnipeg Centre speaks to the very core of what members need when they come to this chamber, that is, not only to be free to speak but also to be understood. To be clear, the sacrosanct right of members to speak is not what is now being questioned; rather, it is the right of members to be understood immediately when they speak in a language other than one of the two official languages that is being raised.

[English]

This acknowledge of the need to bridge understanding between languages was surely at the root of the introduction of simultaneous interpretation for Canada's two official languages in the House in 1958. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 287, explains the intentions of members at that time:

Members were of the opinion that this would give further expression to the Constitution, which provides for the equal status of the official languages and for their use in parliamentary debate.

[Translation]

This critical service, which began by way of an order of the House when members unanimously agreed to a government motion on August 11, 1958, continues to provide integral support to members as they search to understand and participate in parliamentary proceedings.

[English]

The fact that interpretation is provided in our two official languages was not designed or intended to prohibit members from speaking other languages in this chamber. Acting Speaker Kilger confirmed this on June 12, 1995, at page 13605 of *Debates*, when he stated:

At this time, there is nothing in the standing orders preventing anyone from using, as you say, a language that is not one of Canada's two official languages.

[Translation]

Members have availed themselves of this opportunity on many occasions, speaking not only indigenous languages but others as well. However, given the House's current limited technical and physical capacity for interpretation, if members want to ensure that the comments they make in a language other than French or English can be understood by those who are following the proceedings and are part of the official record in the Debates, an extra step is required. Specifically, members need to repeat their comments in one of the two official languages so that our interpreters can provide the appropriate interpretation and so that they may be fully captured in the Debates. By doing so, all members of the House and the public will be able to benefit from the rich value of these interventions.

[English]

The Chair understands fully how some members could find this to be woefully inadequate. Perhaps there is some merit to that view. Perhaps being able to speak in other languages without the benefit of simultaneous interpretation is not good enough for some, even as the Chair reminds members of the impact that inherent physical limitations of the chamber have on the capacity for interpretation.

To offer something more, something different in terms of interpretation services, that is a decision that belongs to the House. As the member for Winnipeg Centre made a passionate argument for the improvement of interpretive services offered simultaneously in the House, I invite him to raise this issue with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which has a mandate for reviewing the procedures and practices of the House and its committees. As the member for Winnipeg Centre noted, other legislative bodies in Canada have had some experience with this issue, perhaps experiences from which the committee could draw upon should it undertake a study on the matter.

[Translation]

In conclusion, while the Chair understands that the current offering of interpretation may be not be seen as ideal by some members, I cannot find that the member for Winnipeg Centre has been prevented from conducting his parliamentary functions.

Therefore, I cannot find that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists in this case.

[English]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1110)

[Translation]

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke to the issue of prorogation, because we now have a historic opportunity to ensure that prorogation will never again be used improperly, and I said that the motion fails to eliminate that possibility.

[*English*]

I was about to close on the subject of prorogation by suggesting to the House, as I have suggested to the hon. government House leader in a paper I prepared on things we could do in our Standing Orders, the advice from Professor Hugo Cyr, L'Université du Québec à Montréal. He raised before the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform, as did Professor Peter Russell, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto, additional reforms for democracy that we should consider making.

Professor Cyr's approach is this:

...to amend the Standing Orders of the House of Commons so that asking for Parliament to be prorogued or dissolved without first obtaining the approval of the House of Commons automatically results in a loss of confidence in the Prime Minister. Consequently, the Governor General would not be bound by a prime minister's advice requesting the early dissolution or prorogation of Parliament without first obtaining the approval of the House of Commons.

This is a very sensible proposal. What the government has proposed is a form of improvement, but there is nothing in the government proposal that would stop the abuse of power such as we saw when Stephen Harper shut down of Parliament to avoid a vote he knew he would lose. Unfortunately, the opposition parties had just recently voted on the Speech from the Throne, mistaking what they thought was a mere formality. It actually was a confidence vote and that is why the Governor General at the time refused to deny Mr. Harper his request for prorogation, although it is historically an affront to parliamentary democracy. We need to close that door now, but the proposal from the government does not do it.

Similarly, I was pleased to see the motion would deal with omnibus bills and allow them to be split, only to be crestfallen to realize they only would be allowed to be split when it came to voting on them, not for studying them. It was actually the case with one of Harper's omnibus bills, Bill C-31, which was introduced in spring 2014. I went to committee, as I was by that point mandated to do by the new motions that were passed to deny me my rights at report stage, to present amendments to various sections of the bill.

These omnibus bills were so big that when I went to committee with amendments to a section, it was the moment when members around the committee realized they had not had any witnesses on that section. It was a commercial chemical section, by the way. I wanted an amendment related to asbestos. The committee had no witnesses, had not studied it, and certainly could not take amendments, but it could pass it because it was under time allocation. When there are multiple sections pushed in the same bill, it is a small improvement to say that the Speaker can split them out for purpose of voting, but we really need those sections split out for purposes of study.

Again, the recommendation from the hon. government House leader is a small improvement but a long way from being adequate.

While we have a chance, there are a lot of things we could look at in the Standing Orders. Again, going back to the advice of Professor

Peter Russell and Professor Hugo Cyr to the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform, we are one of the only modern democracies that does not have a mandatory period between when an election takes place and when the newly elected government convenes Parliament. This loophole has not yet been exploited or abused, but there is no reason not to close the door on it now.

Fundamentally, what is terribly sad about this process is that we lost the opportunity to achieve a consensus on how to change our Standing Orders. This remains a historical, and not a good historical precedent, where the party with the majority of seats in this place, even though it does not have the majority of votes across the land, is able to push through this motion, because the votes are there.

I would urge the government House leader and the Liberals to seriously consider adopting the NDP amendment. It will do no violence to the principles it is espousing. It would at least allow omnibus bills to be split for purposes of study. I urge this to my colleagues. I also hope that in the future we can return to some of the other proposals I made, particularly taking into account the carbon footprint created by our parliamentary schedule. I continue to maintain that we need to consider very closely changing the days and the weeks in which we sit in order to intensify our time in Ottawa and thus reduce the millions of dollars and tons of greenhouse gases as we fly back and forth to this city.

• (1115)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I respect my colleague's years of parliamentary service and her understanding of the protocols in the House. I want to follow up on one of her statements about the omnibus bills. I agree with her that separating them out for the purpose of voting does not give us the opportunity to study them, and that is important.

I notice that budget bills are excluded from that. We have a situation here where the government has tried to bring in a budget bill with an infrastructure bank for \$35 billion of taxpayer money in it. We only had two hours of discussion at committee before the Liberals shut that down. The government also resisted input from the opposition members who said it was complicated, that it had a lot of implications for the Canadian taxpayer, and that it should be studied separately. Now it is in the Senate. The senators brought forward the exact same comments and there was a lot of intervention.

Could the member comment on whether she thinks budget bills should be excluded from the proposed separation?

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Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, that is a specific exclusion. Actually, the most egregious misuse of omnibus legislation over the years I have been in this place, during the 41st Parliament and then since 2015, have specifically been for budget bills. That is, again, a significant failing that is relatively inexplicable, given the stated motives for the changes to the Standing Orders.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speeches are always full of great ideas and lots of good thoughts.

I remember when we started this discussion on improving Parliament, a lot of the discussion was about trying to find ways to make it more family friendly. It seems to me that this was lost along the way. I would like to hear the member's view of what happened to family-friendly improvements to Parliament.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, in the 41st Parliament, the all-party women's caucus spent a lot of time looking at these issues and canvassed what was done in other parliaments. The problem we have in Canada, which means that the advice from the U.K. parliament, for example, does not really work, is that we are a very large country. The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia and I are both in that category of MPs who spend a good deal of their lives on airplanes in order to serve their constituents and be in this place.

There is no perfect solution. Sittings ending earlier so that members in the Ottawa area could get home for dinner would be great for families in the Ottawa area but would not help us get through the work in this place so we could have more time in our constituencies.

I think the best solution, knowing that there is nothing perfect, is to have what I call the Fort McMurray work schedule, which would be three weeks in Ottawa and three weeks in our home ridings, with the three weeks in Ottawa being six days a week. There would be normal hours Monday to Friday and a half day on Saturday. This would actually give MPs a day of rest on the Sunday, because it would be physically impossible to fly home. I believe it would save taxpayers millions of dollars in air flights and would reduce greenhouse gases substantially.

For most families, an accommodation could be made. Other families across this country have accommodated that for family members who have to travel to work. A concentrated three-week period in Ottawa and three weeks in the riding I think would work better.

Clearly, nothing is going to be perfect. Many members from British Columbia, for instance, move their families, particularly with small children, to Ottawa so they can spend more time with their kids in the evenings, helping them with their homework. Then, when they are in their ridings, all they do is work full tilt on constituency issues.

It is a very challenging question, when we are looking at a family-friendly Parliament, as we travel across many time zones.

• (1120)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how can members across parties work together to improve democracy in this place?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean asked the perfect question. To work together here, we need to create those conditions that encourage co-operation, and we need to get rid of those conditions that encourage hyperpartisanship. That means we need to get rid of first past the post and bring in proportional representation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for sharing her time with me.

Ten minutes is valuable time that will allow me to speak to the alleged intent behind the modernization of House of Commons procedure. My political party will have had only 10 minutes to express its views in the House. All the members of the House are complicit in believing that this is perfectly fine.

Since October 19, 2015, I have been experiencing Canadian-style parliamentary democracy. To be honest, it concerns me, both in terms of the inconsistencies between theory and practice and the inconsistencies between this government's intentions and its actions. It concerns me, especially given the discrimination, as well as the complacency about this discrimination, plaguing this House. Whether we like it or not, there are two classes of members in the House. This also means that there are two classes of constituents. There are recognized parties and non-recognized parties, which make up the two classes of members. When it comes to freedom of speech, we do not have the same rights as all parliamentarians in the House.

In terms of its practices, Parliament is stuck in the 19th century. However, the mother parliament of Westminster has evolved. If you ask me, today it would have difficulty recognizing its Canadian offspring, since it grants its minority parties benefits and privileges that this Parliament does not. The aim was to undertake procedural reform. In the area of modernizing procedure, we have been excluded from all parliamentary committees since October 19, 2015.

When the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs wants to meet and seek the approval of all parliamentarians in the House to amend the Standing Orders, members who belong to a non-recognized party continue to be excluded. If this is not discrimination, I do not know what else to call it. Is this ideological segregation? This is following this government's supposed intention to change the voting system in order to allow for a greater ideological diversity of opinions in the House. Obviously, the Liberals have tossed that in the trash, along with their intention to modernize procedure and the Standing Orders.

However, all my colleagues and I were elected, just like all other MPs, to honour the mandate given to us by the people. How is it that everyone accepts the fact that some MPs in the House do not have the same means of giving a voice to their constituents? I am speaking mostly of the contributions of MPs to committees, or parliamentary "commissions" in Quebec, which represent a large part of parliamentarian's work.

Government Orders

If MPs are excluded from committees, what other means do they have left to make the voices of their constituents heard? In committee, when the debate is focused on the principle of a bill, we have the right to vote and are given 10 minutes to say what we think of the bill. After that, it is radio silence. We no longer have the right to vote or intervene. Depending on the government's mood, and if we have played nice in committee, we might be allowed to raise our hand and perhaps be given a brief two minutes to say something. However, we still do not have the right to vote. At report stage we can vote in the House, but there is absolutely no possibility of submitting any amendments that were not submitted in committee.

• (1125)

We do not have the right to vote or the right to speak in committee. Is this what Canadian-style parliamentary democracy looks like? Are we proud of this? I for one am not because I am not given the means to speak on behalf of constituents in the House.

However, we have a democratic principle under which voters pay taxes to the Government of Canada and have the right to be represented by MPs from the Bloc Québécois or the Green Party. These parties should have equitable means for representing their fellow citizens. Freedom of speech is a recognized principle, but an MP's duty to speak is not respected in a fair manner in Parliament.

How could we think that this parliamentary reform of procedure would lead anywhere other than a dead end? According to parliamentary tradition, changing the rules of the game requires trying for the greatest consensus possible. In December 2015, this government gave the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, a committee that we are excluded from, the mandate to modernize how the House works, within a perspective of work-family balance. That is an excellent idea, because after having sat as a member in another parliament, I can tell you that work-family balance is pathetic here in Ottawa.

However, today, this entire aspect has been set aside, along with the willingness to acknowledge all legislators of the House. Parliamentary procedure is controlled by executive power, which, in any case, is always looking to bypass legislative power, since hearing members speak takes too long. There are no ministers in the committees, but the government would like to give parliamentary secretaries more rights than I have. They will automatically receive the right to intervene, even if they do not have the right to vote. The executive will then be able to once again deliver its messages to the majority legislators of the governing party so that they do not deviate from the executive line of government. There is no separation of powers.

This government, however, was supposed to do politics differently. Changing the voting system, which allowed each vote to count, among other things, was thrown out. Reforming the financing of political parties was also tossed, and this could have at least allowed each vote to count, in a British system, by paying parties an allowance in proportion to the number of votes that they received. Work-family balance was scrapped along with the recognition of minority parties in the House, the fundamental right of parliamentarians of all parties to do their job in the House,

freedom of speech, and the value of justice, because it is a matter of justice.

The fairness principle must be absolutely respected. However, when it is a matter of the right of only one member, one can assume that all members of the House may not be able to speak, as there are 338 members. This refers to parties. I have not heard many members, except for the member of the Green Party, agreeing with us and saying that what the members of the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois are experiencing is terrible, and that they support us because they would never want to be in that position.

I therefore ask our fellow legislators whether they support us in this interpretation of a bad reform of the procedure.

• (1130)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for presenting his point of view. I belong to a party that has already been in this situation in the history of this Parliament.

If I understand clearly, the parallel that you are making in relation to a reform of the voting system, the financing of political parties, or the changes presented to us is that it basically does not take into account the fact that we now have a multi-party system. Like most countries, we no longer have a two-party system. Any changes must take into account this multi-party system, whether we are talking about the reform of the voting system, political financing, or functioning of the House. Did I properly understand your position?

The Speaker: I remind the member to direct her comments through the Chair.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has understood completely. Just because we are in a British system does not mean that it cannot be adapted and that the two-party card must be abused. This two-party system resistance has been outdated for more than a century. Because of that resistance this Parliament is out of step with Canadians and with what they have told us, particularly before the special committee that sought to reform the voting system.

In the case of the voting system, the government agreed to give us the right to speak and the right to vote in a special committee to change the rules of democracy; however, in regard to procedure, the very procedure that excluded us from our very first day in this Parliament, the answer was no, there will be no special committee. We will not be able to defend our views to convince other legislators. Each of my colleagues opposite seem to subscribe heart and soul to the controlling policy of their government, although they would not be at all pleased to be in our place. I would not want them to experience in the near future what minority parties have to go through in this Parliament, namely ideological discrimination.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sympathetic to what the member is saying. For 18 or 19 years, a good portion of the time I was in the Manitoba legislature, we did not have party status. Today we still do not have party status at the provincial level. It requires four seats to achieve that.

Government Orders

I had recognized back then that it was not just the government but also the opposition parties that would often make things difficult with respect to achieving that, so I wonder if the member across the way could share with the House the extent of his discussions with the official opposition and the third party with respect to their viewpoints. Does he believe that they are prepared to see the Bloc Québécois get party status?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the government's prerogative is to table bills such as reform proposals.

My colleague does quite remarkable work in the House and is a brilliant debater. If his party wanted minority parties to have the same rights as all parliamentarians in the House, that would have been included in what they tabled to be considered in committee.

The Bloc Québécois tabled a motion to create the same kind of committee as the special committee on the reform of the voting system. It was the Liberals who told us no. They did not want a special committee on procedure. They can pass the buck to the Conservatives or the New Democrats, who can speak for themselves. I have asked them. I asked them if they agree with me regarding the right of every party in the House to fair treatment, but they remained silent. However, I know that the government spoke expressly against what I am advocating here today.

It is a shame, when they claim to want to do politics differently.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to Motion No. 18. It is an important motion, one that impacts the way we conduct business here in the chamber. I am also pleased to split my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge. I know he too has a lot to say on this matter.

I think it is fair to say that members on this side of the House strongly believe the government is trying to stifle the opposition's ability to protect the people we are elected to serve. What separates us from tyranny and revolution is our right, lent to us by the people, to stand in this place and contest ideas and demand that the government explain itself.

These are not sunny ways. These are dark days for democracy. The Prime Minister is not interested in working with members on this side of the House of Commons. The government simply wants to get its agenda through the door, regardless of the impact on Canadians. The role of the opposition, as we all know, is to hold government to account, debate ideas, and represent the people in our constituencies. It has become clear over the past two years that the opposition is just an inconvenience to the Prime Minister's agenda. He wants an audience, not an opposition.

Back in March, the government attempted, among other things, to reduce the opportunity for members to hold the government to account. The government intended to do this by eliminating Friday sittings, putting automatic time allocation on bills, eliminating the effectiveness of committees through preventing opposition parties from triggering debates on reports, and implementing closure changes to committees.

How Motion No. 18 came about, late on a Friday afternoon when members of the House were either back in their ridings or on their way there, is very suspect. The government decided it was a good time to spring these changes on the members of the House. It was not the government House leader but her colleague who gave notice to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, on which I sit, that these matters would be studied and everything wrapped up in a couple of months.

Yesterday the official opposition's House leader, the member for Portage—Lisgar, mentioned four examples in recent years when the Canadian Parliament worked together to form a consensus on changes to House procedure: Pierre Trudeau's Lefebvre committee; the McGrath committee, set up by Brian Mulroney; Jean Chrétien's special committee on modernization and improvement; and the previous Conservative government, under the stewardship of Stephen Harper, which worked co-operatively with all parties to bring in permanent procedural amendments.

I am honestly at a loss as to why the government ignored previous parliamentary traditions on working collectively on changes to House procedure. I thought this was the government that campaigned on working together.

I am very proud that both the NDP House leader and the opposition House leader worked together to suggest an alternative, a special all-party committee to work on a consensus to review our procedures and to propose alternatives. This would have been an opportunity to put aside partisanship and work in a collegial spirit to strengthen, not weaken, members' ability to protect Canadians' interests. If the Prime Minister was truly committed to working with this Parliament, he should have seen the value in that proposal.

There is a reason that the two sides of this chamber are separated by two swords' lengths. There was a time when parliamentary democracy was not as collegial as it is today. One has to but open a history book to see what happens when the people have no power or when it is stripped from them. Blood has been shed in the fight to enshrine and protect the rights of members of Parliament to fully represent their constituents. The government intends to deprive us of those rights. It will perhaps not happen all at once, but if it is successful here in this instance, make no mistake: the erosion of the House of Commons will have begun, and before long I fear this place will become redundant.

I would now like to turn to a brief overview of the changes the government is proposing in this motion.

Within 20 days of a new session following a prorogation, the government has to submit a report explaining the reasons that it prorogued. This rule is nothing more than sleight of hand. The opposition already has means to demand of the government answers to why it prorogued.

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• (1140)

We have an opportunity to scrutinize the government. It is called question period. Unless the government's aim is to limit the availability of the Prime Minister during question period or perhaps even limit the powers of parliamentarians to debate ideas in this place, then all that is needed for scrutiny is an open question period that the Prime Minister attends for as many days as possible. Perhaps the government has more foresight than we gave it credit for.

In all seriousness, the inclusion of this item in the motion before us is nothing more than basically checking a box in the Liberal 2019 election pamphlet. If Liberals have issues with prorogation, they simply should promise not to do it and stick with that promise.

That brings me to omnibus bills. Under these proposals, the Speaker of the House of Commons would have the power to divide those bills for the purpose of voting “where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions”. As the motion reads, the exception would be budget bills.

If I recall correctly, not so long ago the current government was in opposition and would raise a hue and cry over those same omnibus budget bills. Now Liberals stand here decrying these evil omnibus bills, except that now they will allow them if they are budget bills. I guess there was one thing for the campaign and another thing for after being elected.

The most recent government omnibus budget bill included the new Liberal infrastructure bank, a bank that will offer taxpayer-backed loans and loan guarantees to cover the losses of wealthy foreign investors who build megaprojects in Canada. These are the kinds of bills the government has no problem passing in an omnibus bill, the kinds of bills for which it wants limited scrutiny. We are not even sure if members of the board of this \$35-billion taxpayer-funded bank will be Canadians. We may see foreign directors funding foreign investors, with taxpayers on the hook for any losses. I do not understand this logic. Perhaps this is simply a means to balance out the election pamphlet that the Liberals are working on for 2019.

These first two items are nothing more than smoke and mirrors. The following item is much more nefarious, and in this connection a March 26 *Globe and Mail* opinion piece warned the Canadian public to keep an eye on what is happening in Parliament.

According to the government, a new schedule for budgets and main estimates documents will be created so that the Treasury Board Secretariat can have time to have the main estimates reflect what is in the budget. This is not the case in reality.

I applaud that the government wishes to better coordinate the budget and the main estimates, but reducing the time the opposition and stakeholders have to scrutinize the main estimates is not the way to do it. This is an issue of time management, nothing more.

The main estimates, for the benefit of the public watching, are the instrument the government uses that leads to the eventual authorization by Parliament for the government to spend the public's money. Perhaps that is the heart of the issue. The government has never really been serious about financial accountability. I am not even sure it realizes where this money comes from. Here is a

reminder: it comes from the Canadian public, the people who work hard day in and day out for their paycheques. That is who the money belongs to, and I think every Canadian would demand that there be parliamentary oversight on that procedure. The government cannot take away the right of the public to scrutinize government spending simply by reducing the time parliamentarians and other stakeholders have to examine the main estimates. It is not Parliament that is delaying the government's spending; it is the government's own internal practices. If the government wants better alignment, it should get the main estimates to us a lot sooner.

The last item I will speak to today centres on committee business. In an attempt to neuter opposition MPs, the government plans to introduce an amendment to prevent ministers from sitting on committees. Instead, it will allow parliamentary secretaries to sit as ex officio members. There is only so much time committees have, and with an extra member for the government at the table, we can bet that opposition time will be affected. These parliamentary secretaries might not be able to vote, but they will have every other right of committee members. They will be in a position to effectively steer the committee toward their ministers' agenda, and that is something Liberals directly campaigned against.

I am not saying that Parliament must not renew and review its parliamentary procedures from time to time. I am on the procedure and House affairs committee and I get it, but we are talking about consensus by all parties to come to an agreement on how this place works.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It must be said that his party has always been quite clear about its rather stubborn desire to lead the country without worrying much about details. In the 10 years that the Harper government was in power, we often saw the same kind of approach.

While Canadians have the unpleasant surprise of seeing that the Liberal government, after promising true blue, even “obamaesque”, democracy, is adopting its own preferred agenda, does the member enjoy seeing the Liberals taking a governing approach that somewhat resembles that of his own government, which at least had the merit of not hiding it?

The Conservative government did not care that people were not happy and did what it wanted. As for the Liberals, they give nice speeches on a great positive democracy and sunny ways, but in the end their agenda is rather dark. They decide everything and we must keep quiet.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, my friend is absolutely right. I think that goes to my point about the *Globe and Mail* article, which basically focused on encouraging Canadians to pay attention to what is going on in Parliament. I know Canadians are busy and it is our job to get the message out, but I think that was the focus: be aware of what is going on in Parliament, because the Liberal Party, through its draconian measures, is stripping members of the opposition of any power they have to hold the government to account.

So far we have been successful at pushing back at that, and I thank the members of the NDP for their co-operation. It was a good working relationship and we do appreciate it, but it is only the fact that we have been able to push back.

We look at Motion No. 6. We look at the Standing Order changes proposed. I believe it was March that it came out, and now there is this latest batch of changes, none of which are using consensus to change the procedures on how this place works. I wish they had used a historical precedent, because there are previous governments and previous prime ministers who did just that.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will just highlight one thing that my hon. colleague spoke about, and he can answer for me. He spoke about the parliamentary secretaries being members of the committee now and able to sit in, but it is my understanding they do not have any voting powers, so they will not be voting on any motions in committee.

Could he explain how it changes or puts forward the government position any differently than now, with a parliamentary secretary able to attend and not able to speak, or in the fact that when it comes to witnesses appearing or any debate that takes place, there is an allotted time frame for each party and a schedule that everybody sticks to, whether it is five minutes or seven?

Can he explain to me how he sees that changing in some way through the parliamentary secretary being present at committee?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I do understand the question of my colleague across the way. At the procedure and House affairs committee, and I think every committee is the master of its own domain, what we are seeing now is the committee working somewhat well, minus the ramming through of changes to the Standing Orders that we had to deal with, but the problem now is that committees will not be the masters of their own domain. We will have the parliamentary secretary sitting there directing traffic, and that is something the Liberals very explicitly campaigned against. That is where we take exception to this change in the Standing Orders.

• (1150)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to pick up on this point of parliamentary secretaries sitting on committees as ex officio members.

Certainly during our time in government, the parliamentary secretary was there, part of the committee, quarterbacking the work that needed to be done. We know this idea of not having them there officially was tried in 1986 but scrapped in 1991. Thomas Sowell said this:

One of the most important reasons for studying history is that virtually every stupid idea that is in vogue today has been tried before and proved disastrous before, time and again.

If the government is so intent on having parliamentary secretaries at committee, why not let them sit there as full members to quarterback the work of government, as they really should be doing?

The Speaker: The member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock has 20 seconds.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, in 20 seconds, I appreciate the question from my friend from Kitchener—Conestoga.

That is basically what the Liberals were campaigning against. They were going to take that away. They campaigned against it and now they are going back on that, so that is issue number one. However, he is right that the parliamentary secretaries are able to direct traffic, which I mentioned before, which actually allowed the committees maybe to be a bit more productive. Some may argue not.

I just say that is another broken campaign promise.

I hope that was 20 seconds.

The Speaker: A little more, but there we go.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure, as always, to rise in this place and add to the debate, this time on Motion No. 18, a motion to amend the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

Here we are. We are on the second day of debate on this motion and we are on the fourth-last scheduled sitting day of the session, under extended sitting hours, and talking about the changes to the Standing Orders. How did this happen and how did we get here? In order to explain the position that I am going to take on this motion and how I am going to use my vote and my voice on behalf of my constituents of Calgary Rocky Ridge, I am going to explain a bit of the context behind this motion for the benefit of constituents watching at home.

At the time of dissolution of the last Parliament, the Liberals were the third party in the House. They had 30-odd seats. They had a new untested leader. They had little to lose and they came up with an idealistic platform that included many promises that were designed to capture the imagination of Canadians, in contrast to a government that was very familiar to Canadians by virtue of its having won three consecutive elections and governing for nearly 10 years. Therefore, one might go so far as to say that the Liberals' 2015 platform perhaps was designed more to improve from the third-party status than to be a serious platform under which to govern.

Government Orders

It contained a lot of promises, including a modest deficit of \$10 billion, and a stimulatory and not structural deficit that would result in immediate GDP growth and a swift return to balance. Obviously that did not happen. It also contained a promise to change the voting system within the first 18 months. That also did not happen.

The Liberals also had a promise to modernize the House of Commons, and what that meant was fairly vague. They threw out some idealistic buzzwords and mused about whether the House of Commons could be made more family friendly, a worthy ideal for many of us. I am a husband and a father of three children, so I am all for family friendliness.

The Liberals really only had four specific promises related to the Standing Orders. They promised that they would amend the Standing Orders to prevent omnibus bills; they promised not to use prorogation; they promised they would instill a British-style prime minister's question period, compelling the Prime Minister to answer all the questions one day a week; and they promised that they would change the estimates process so that the main estimates would reflect the current budget.

We know that Canadians took the current government at its word in the election and elected them on the strength of these and many other idealistic promises. However, soon enough the Liberals began to discover that reality is a tough place, an unforgiving place, and, once elected, reality is inescapable. One by one, the Liberal promises have been broken, set aside, or just plain abandoned. The Liberals' first attempt at what they called modernizing the House of Commons could be more properly called muzzling the opposition and disenfranchising the millions of Canadians who elected the 154 members of the opposition parties on this side of the House. It happened last year when Motion No. 6 tried to impose limits on debate and give members of the government additional powers over the House. That motion fortunately was abandoned on the night of the long elbows last May.

After that, the government expended enormous amounts of political capital, committee time, public money, and teasing the activist base whose support they stole from the NDP in the last election on their failed electoral reform agenda. Following that, the government then took its second stab at fulfilling its election promise on Standing Orders reform with its absurdly called "discussion paper", delivered after hours on a Friday in March, followed by a motion with a deadline at the procedure and House affairs committee the next week. That motion and the so-called discussion paper called for all kinds of draconian and thoroughly undemocratic measures, including limiting debate through giving the government the power to pre-allocate time in the House of Commons, limiting debate at committees; and reducing the number of sitting days each week, thus reducing the number of days that the government would be compelled to be accountable to Canadians by facing the opposition in the House, especially during question period.

The reaction by the opposition parties was swift and predictable. Recognizing what was at stake, the Conservatives and the NDP used every means available under the existing Standing Orders to prevent the government from proceeding. At the height of the Standing Orders debacle at PROC, *The Globe and Mail* wrote an editorial that pointed out that in a majority Parliament when a government can

pass any law or motion it wants, the opposition really only has two weapons at its disposal: moral suasion and the power to delay.

• (1155)

Both of those weapons were used to maximum effect, and eventually the government realized that the opposition would go to any lengths to prevent it from changing the Standing Orders without all-party consent, something that no other government has had the arrogance or contempt for the opposition to attempt before. That perhaps is wherein lies the rub. The Liberals seem quite sincere in their belief that whatever makes it easier and more convenient for the government and limits the ability of the opposition to hold it accountable is somehow democratic.

Members on the government side seem to sincerely believe that the opposition should merely act as spectators. It has been said before by me and by many of my colleagues that we are not an audience. We are the opposition. We were elected to this place just as each member on the other side was. We were elected by people who do not support the government's agenda and expect us to speak on their behalf. They expect us to demand accountability. They expect us to examine proposed expenditures. They do not expect us to simply act as mere spectators. They expect vigorous debate and robust daily question periods attended by the Prime Minister. They certainly do not expect us to surrender the very limited tools that we possess to do the job we were elected to do.

This brings me to the present and the details of the motion before us.

At first glance, the motion might appear not unreasonable, a compromise perhaps compared with the outrageous Motion No. 6, with the machinations that happened at PROC and the absurd statements that the government House leader has been making for months. In fact, one might for a moment be tempted to even give credit to the government for abandoning nearly all of the draconian changes signalled by its March so-called discussion paper and its Motion No. 6 of last year. Before doing that, however, let us consider what the motion would do and how it stacks up to the Liberals' supposedly sacrosanct commitment to delivering on the specific election promises related to Standing Orders and so-called modernization of the House of Commons.

With this motion, the government has abandoned its promise to change the Standing Orders for a prime minister's question period. Perhaps it has finally realized that this is something it could have done all along without a change to the Standing Orders, or perhaps it has realized just how poorly the present Prime Minister performs, so it is no longer so keen on the idea of a prime minister's question period.

The motion's so-called modernization of the estimates process would reduce the amount of time for committees to review the estimates, thereby reducing accountability.

Government Orders

Giving the Speaker the power to split a bill, not a budget-related bill and only for this Parliament, really is a joke within the context of the Liberals' promise and their past objections to omnibus legislation. The number of omnibus bills they have already tabled makes this part of the motion hilariously cynical.

The requirement to table a prorogation press release is also ridiculous, given the Liberals' promises and their past statements on this subject.

In short, despite the fact that this appears now to be merely token lip service to Standing Orders reform, I could never support the motion, because to do so would be to reward the government for its cynicism and for its spectacular incompetence. There is no way that we will let the Liberals claim that their grotesque mismanagement of this file has somehow ended in all-party support, all-party support that they have never seriously tried to obtain.

• (1200)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seems to underestimate the respect that we all have on this side for having this good discussion and robust discussions in committee. In my committee, I am always happy to hear thoughts and to debate what we can do to make things better and how we can proceed on different studies. I would like to point that out to the member.

In that respect, I did find one thing in the motion that is interesting, which is the proposed change to Standing Order 116, which would allow for the continuation of debate as long as somebody is interested in participating.

I wonder if the member does not see value in continuing robust debate in committee among all members of represented parties.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, my committee, the access to information, privacy, and ethics committee, also has broad co-operation. We get along quite well on that committee. We are proud of the work we have done there.

That is not really the concern I have. The concern is with PROC. I do not know if this member would characterize what went on there as being in the same vein of co-operation. What happened there was an outrage and an affront to democracy, with the Liberals trying to ram through changes to the Standing Orders without all-party consent.

I will point out, for the benefit of both this member and others, that there are members on the government side who saw the cynicism and the outrageous contempt for our institutions at play in the Liberals' attempt to change the Standing Orders. Some spoke out about it, and they deserve credit for doing so. I know that many members on that side agreed with the opposition about the mistreatment that was at work in that debate.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, when knocking on doors, I heard a lot from residents concerned with the previous Harper government's use of omnibus legislation and the abuse by the government previously in ramming through legislation.

This was one of the election commitments in my riding and those of all members on this side of the House. This is in direct response to that commitment that we made.

Does the hon. member feel that the abuse of omnibus legislation that the Harper government used should just continue?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, if this was raised at the doors in her riding, I wonder how it is going to go when she returns to those doors next time. She is going to have some awfully disappointed constituents.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week some individuals implied that the speech I gave last week might have been my last speech. I want to disabuse them of that thought, because I am standing here today. However, in the same speech I had indicated I was not sure whether I would have the opportunity for many more 20-minute slots. Today, in that case, I will leave some ongoing confusion. I only have a 10-minute slot today because it is my intention to split my time with the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

While I have the floor, at this particular point, I really want to thank my hon. colleague for standing in for me when my health challenge arose again. I recognized that my capacity to actually carry out some of my House duties would be challenging. He has so admirably stepped in for me when I have not been able to perform that particular function. I want to thank him for his service and for his friendship in many ways covering much of my duty when I was not able to be here.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to listen to the addresses of the House leader, the opposition House leader, and the New Democratic Party House leader, along with the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly. I will focus most of my comments in response to the opposition House leader's very lengthy address. I probably will not be able to get through all of the points that I want to deal with, but I will acknowledge that I think the opposition House leader provided fairly lengthy criticism with respect to the process that led up to this point.

I think the one thing that was missing is to back up and to look at how we got here, not just what has transpired in the last few months, but what transpired under the previous government. It is that history that I want to address a bit, which I think needs to be part of the record, in terms of how a lot of issues that are now reflected in Motion No. 18 ultimately became part of our electoral platform in response to how the previous government treated this institution of Parliament. I will deal with some of those particular issues.

The first one I want to deal with is the first major test of Canadians' confidence in this institution at the end of 2008, shortly after the election that led to the Stephen Harper government being returned with a larger minority Parliament but not quite a majority. What transpired at that time was the coalition of three of the parties, the Liberals, the New Democratic Party, and the Bloc Québécois, to potentially defeat the government on a confidence motion, which led former prime minister Harper to go to the Governor General to seek a prorogation shortly after that government had already tabled the throne speech and had barely begun the legislative session.

Government Orders

The point I want to make is that ultimately prorogation is a crown prerogative, and so the ability of this House to circumscribe the crown's prerogatives is fairly limited. The criticism that came from the opposition House leader's attack on the proposed change in Motion No. 18 was that she did not see it having any merit or any particular point.

The purpose of this particular proposed change to prorogation is simply to shed light on the actual advice that the leader of the government, the prime minister of the day, is recommending to the Governor General as to why prorogation ought to be granted. Ultimately, that is entirely at the discretion of the Governor General. However, what this process does is shed light on that request. That is all it can do. It has, essentially, a political consequence and nothing more. That is essentially the purpose of why this particular amendment is being proposed within the Standing Orders.

The second thing that came out under the Harper government was, of course, the excessive use of omnibus legislation, particularly related to unrelated themes or unrelated matters. That is the one thing that we are trying to change, with respect to the proposed changes under the draft section 69.1 of the Standing Orders.

• (1205)

I acknowledge that we could have been clearer in the electoral campaign platform with respect to budget bills because, by their very nature, all budget bills are omnibus legislation. The point we are trying to make under proposed subsection 69.1(2) is that, if the budget bill proposes to make changes to other consequential acts, those changes have to be directly related to the implementation of the budget. It would be quite inefficient to break up a budget bill into numerous component parts because it would essentially render the whole budgetary process unworkable. The key in this area is the transfer of power from the government to the Speaker to make the final determination as to whether a piece of legislation is considered omnibus legislation or not, and the discretion would then rest entirely with the Speaker.

The third proposed area that is captured in Motion No. 18 relates to the estimates. The purpose of that change is to deal with what is a backward process right now where information about the budget is not clear. The changes being proposed would give parliamentarians better information ahead the budgetary process of instead of after it.

The fourth element that is proposed within Motion No. 18 deals specifically with parliamentary secretaries. In the previous Parliaments under the Conservative government, particularly in the 41st Parliament, in many but not necessarily all committees we saw the parliamentary secretary of the day dominating the agenda and denuding the broad capacity of all members of the House, particularly on the government side, from seriously looking at legislation that was coming through. The proposal we are putting forth in the Standing Orders would clarify the role of a parliamentary secretary. Parliamentary secretaries would still play an important liaison role with both the minister and the ministries they represent, but we would take away their capacity to be part of quorum and to vote. However, they would still play a very important liaison function with respect to dealing more rapidly with any of the issues that may arise at committee, through their participation. That is the

fourth purpose in Motion No. 18 as to why the proposed changes are being advanced.

With respect to the last item, which has not made it into Motion No. 18, with respect to a prime minister's question period, the government has chosen to advance that particular measure by way of an established practised convention. I hope that we would give some serious consideration to following the United Kingdom model where the big difference is that, unlike the model we are executing now, the questions are tabled two days in advance by the opposition, which gives the prime minister of the day the opportunity to have a more extensive response. This is as opposed to playing gotcha, as we are seeing right now with respect to question period.

I want to wrap up by simply saying that there has been some suggestion that there is an underhanded attempt by this government to ram through changes to the Standing Orders. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. If the House leader had every intention of ramming things through, rather than presenting the discussion paper that was brought forward to PROC, she would have simply tabled a motion directly to the House to change the Standings Orders and to ram everything through that the government wanted, which is probably what the previous government would have done. This government did not do that. I want Canadians to understand that was never the intent or purpose behind the discussion paper. The intent was to solicit honest feedback. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was already doing very good work on a number of fronts, and this was to expand some of the other ideas that we felt merited discussion.

I am happy to take questions from any of my colleagues.

• (1210)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague for Scarborough—Agincourt spent quite a bit of time on the history of the 2008 prorogation and his view of the proposed changes in the context of that experience. I wonder if, perhaps, many of us have a hard time getting over events and dwell on certain flashpoints in the past.

The explanation he gave, although lengthy, seemed to me to be no more than saying that when Conservatives prorogue, it is bad, and when Liberals may wish to prorogue in the future, it is okay. I really do not see how this change is addressing it being wrong for a government to prorogue the House, especially while a party is colluding with two other parties, a separatist party and a socialist party, to form a coalition government elected by nobody.

Can the member comment on whether that experience is colouring this particular part of the bill?

• (1215)

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of issues in the past, in different governments, including the Mackenzie King government in 1926. At that time, the government of the day did not seek prorogation; it sought to call a new election. The governor general at the time, Lord Byng, refused to do so. From my perspective, what occurred in 2008 was clearly a potentially precedent-setting event.

Government Orders

I am simply suggesting that there are limits on crown prerogative in the sense that the House cannot override the right of the crown to execute its function. The point of this particular Standing Order change is simply to shed light on the rationale behind a request for prorogation. It would only be controversial when we were dealing with minority Parliaments. In a majority Parliament, that request would almost always be granted as a matter of right, because there would be no potential issue of confidence.

My point is that this particular change would simply allow for light to be shed on the advice that right now is confidential between the prime minister of the day and the governor general. I recognize that the governor general would have the absolute right to make whatever decision he or she ultimately decided with respect to that particular request.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would first like to say, through you, Mr. Speaker, how happy I am to have known him. It is an honour for me to have had the pleasure of working with him.

My question is about the last part of his speech. He presented his various arguments to us very clearly, but at the end of his speech, he spoke of intention. An intention must translate into actions, but the government's approach, in moving this motion, did not at all create a climate of co-operation.

Should this government not have followed the example of Jean Chrétien and others, who wanted to make changes in the House and who truly created a forum for discussion that allowed everyone to reach consensus in good faith? The government's approach did not do that. It was clear, in the opposition's view, that the decision was made unilaterally. This entire process did not reflect the intention that the member expressed.

At the end of this process, we still cannot support this motion because it does not reflect the contribution that we would have liked to make as the opposition.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for her friendship and for a fair question to the government. One of the things requested in the motion at PROC and with respect to the broader request from the opposition parties, which was to require unanimity among the recognized political parties before any changes to the Standing Orders could take place, would have essentially granted a veto to the Conservative Party on matters we were attempting to address from our campaign election platform commitments, which we knew they were opposed to and would like to see, frankly, not take place.

The government was not prepared to grant that request, as it related to the electoral platform commitment, and that is exactly what is reflected in Motion No. 18. We have withdrawn all the other ideas and concepts we wanted to have a discussion on. However, we are committed still to the ones we promised Canadians we would get done. It is unfortunate that the opposition will not be supporting us as we try to move forward.

●(1220)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for sharing his time with me. It is emblematic of the duties we have been sharing over the past year as I have been working with him to back him up in his deputy House leadership duties.

While my dream of fixing the clocks in this place to be digital remains unfulfilled, there are a number of more serious Standing Order issues that need to be addressed. While the opposition has often accused Liberal members in this place of wanting to change the Standing Orders to government advantage, I would argue that the opposite is true.

Many of us on this side were here when we were in opposition. A few of us survived the decimation to third party. I started as a staffer, working for Frank Valeriote, the previous member for Guelph, in his constituency office early in the 40th Parliament. I eventually found myself working here for the member for Ottawa South, where I worked when the government was found to be in contempt of Parliament and an election was forced in early 2011. I subsequently worked for both those members as well as the current members for Halifax West, whom I take great pride in calling Mr. Speaker today, and the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, all, for a short period, at the same time.

Working for four excellent members of Parliament, with different personalities and areas of interest, I gained a great breadth of experience and perspective, which has been a key part of learning how to do this job. It also gave me an up-close perspective on the abuses of power, on a daily basis, by the previous government. That is the perspective from which this motion has been written, that of the third party. To make the point, I want to go over Motion No. 18 one piece at a time.

In 2008, most of us will remember that the Liberals, NDP, and Bloc got together in an effort to take down the freshly re-elected Harper government. Whatever one thinks of the details of that agreement, a majority of members intended to vote no confidence in a sitting minority government. To avoid this, Harper visited then governor general Michaëlle Jean and asked her to prorogue Parliament, a request she granted after a couple of hours of deliberation.

Parliament is often prorogued between dissolutions. Of the past seven Parliaments, only one did not have at least one prorogation, that being Paul Martin's minority 38th Parliament. Proroguing itself is definitely legitimate. In the 2008 instance, however, it was used as a tool to avoid a confidence vote. We all know how history played out after that, and it was a tactical success for Prime Minister Harper.

The first clause of Motion No. 18 would not prevent a prime minister from proroguing, but it would require the executive to explain why they felt it was necessary and would mandate the procedure and House affairs committee to revisit the matter. It would not prevent abuse, but it would raise the bar on prorogation.

Government Orders

It is a bit of a marvel to me that, in my experience, no one has tried to do a massive private member's bill that rethinks the role of government from one end to the other. It would be a pretty interesting two-hour debate and is only currently prevented by convention, not rule.

In the last Parliament, the government had some impressively scattered omnibus bills. The standard here is not about how many laws a bill amends but rather if those various and sundry changes all serve the overall purpose of the bill. For example, Bill C-49, which passed at second reading here only yesterday, was cited by many in the opposition as an omnibus bill because it intends to modify 13 existing acts. However, this is spurious, because all the changes legitimately and clearly fall under the concept of the name of the act, the transportation modernization act, and some of those 13 existing-act changes are both relevant and miniscule.

For example, clause 91 of Bill C-49 is the section that would amend the Budget Implementation Act, 2009. This change reads, in whole, "Parts 14 and 15 of the Budget Implementation Act, 2009 are repealed." A quick investigation will reveal that Part 14 is amendments to the Canada Transportation Act and Part 15 is amendments to the Air Canada Public Participation Act, both well within the purview of the Minister of Transport to modernize within his mandate. Both sets of amendments from that Budget Implementation Act, 2009, which was called Bill C-10 in the second session of the 40th Parliament, came with a coming into force clause that read, in part, "come into force on a day to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council made on the recommendation of the Minister". The most remarkable part of this eight-year-old piece of legislation is that the Governor in Council never brought these changes into force.

Getting rid of obsolete, never implemented bits of transportation law is clearly within the frame of transportation modernization.

In 2012, the Conservative government brought in a wide-ranging budget bill that implemented much of what it called Canada's economic action plan, but it also went after environmental legislation that had nothing to do with the budget. Among other things, it stripped legal protection for Canada's millions of lakes and waterways. This was slowed down, but not stopped, by more than 1,000 amendments to the bill at the finance committee, resulting in an around-the-clock filibuster-by-vote at clause-by-clause study. I was there as staff for the final shift of that marathon vote.

The second section of Motion No. 18 would attempt to address these problems. Any bill presented in the House that did not focus on a single theme or overarching purpose could be split by the Speaker. While there would be an exception for budgets, the phrasing of that section, which would be standing order 69.1(2), would only seek to clarify that the objectives outlined in the budget would in their own right define the purpose. Attempting to change environmental law in a budget implementation act, without having defined it in the budget itself, for example, would permit a point of order to be raised and accepted by the Speaker to carve that section out of the BIA. This change is important and is something we committed to doing.

● (1225)

The third change is a little more arcane.

I was a staff member on the public accounts committee for a short period in the 41st Parliament and was a member of government operation and estimates early on in the 42nd Parliament for about the same length of time. I do not pretend to have any great understanding of the minutiae of the estimates process and defer to those who do. That is a big part of the point here. I welcome anything that can help bring clarity to the estimates process.

The fourth change in the Standing Orders in this motion is a particularly interesting one, covering sections 4 to 6 of Motion No. 18.

In the last Parliament, I believe most of us who were around had the same experience. Committees were run by parliamentary secretaries. They sat next to the chair, moved motions, voted, and otherwise controlled the committees. This utterly and totally defeats the point of parliamentary committees. The parliamentary secretary is, by definition, the representative of the minister. In this capacity, parliamentary secretaries serve a critical role in liaising between the committee and the department the committee oversees.

Being able to answer questions about intent and plans from the committee on a timely basis or bringing concerns or issues for study that ministers would like feedback on in the course of their duties are completely appropriate. However, when parliamentary secretaries run the committees, these oversight bodies cease to oversee much of anything and simply become extensions of the executive branch of government. If that is what we are to have, the committees serve little purpose. Including parliamentary secretaries on committees as liaisons with their departments instead of as the planners and executors of the work of those committees is the right balance.

This is really important. During the Reform Act debate in the last Parliament, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, for whom I have great respect and have for many years, commented to me that as a backbencher, he was not government. "Like you," he said to me, "my role is to keep the government to account. The difference is", he concluded, "I have confidence in the government."

This critical bit of political philosophy has stuck with me since that day. Our role as backbenchers is indeed to keep government to account whether we are on the government or opposition benches. One of the most critical tools to achieve that is committees, and when this government talks about restoring independence to committees, it is not a meaningless catchphrase or sound bite; it is legitimate. I have seen the transition on committee function from last Parliament to this Parliament and it is truly something. Keeping parliamentary secretaries in a participatory, but not controlling, role on committees is a critical element of this.

Government Orders

The last change, section 7 of the motion, is particularly interesting. The one place where the opposition has immense power, even in a majority government, is in the power of the filibuster at committee. An opposition member determined to prevent a vote from taking place or a report from being written at a committee has the absolute power to do so, as long as he or she is willing to talk out the clock and stay reasonably on point. Our colleague from Hamilton Centre is an expert at this task, often joking that after half an hour of talking he has not yet finished clearing his throat.

When we had the debate on reforming the Standing Orders that went sideways at PROC a few weeks ago, we were accused of trying to kill the filibuster. This could not be further from the truth.

In that debate, we sought to have a conversation about how to change the Standing Orders. The government House Leader had written a letter with her ideas of what changes she hoped we would discuss on top of the numerous ideas already before us on account of the Standing Order 51 debate from last fall. However, but if we refer back to the previous elements of this speech, where we landed was up to us as a committee. An idea floated was that members at committee be limited to an unlimited number of 10-minute speaking slots rather than a single slot with no end.

The way I understand this would work in practice is that any member can speak for as long as he or she wishes at committee, but when another member signals his or her interest in speaking, the member would have 10 minutes to cede the floor before the other member would take over, before giving it back again if the first member so chose. The effect of this would be to ensure that every member on a committee would have an opportunity to speak in any debate, but would not limit anyone from tying up committee and would not kill the filibuster either in the instance or in principle. It certainly would make it easier to negotiate our way out of one by giving others a chance to get a word in edgewise.

However, the change proposed here is not about that. It is about getting rid of one of the most absurd abuses of committee procedure we saw in previous parliaments: that a member of the committee majority would take the floor, even on a point of order, and say to the chair something like, "I move that we call the question." The chair would correctly say that it was out of order and reject the request for the vote. The member would then move to challenge the chair, the majority would vote that the chair was wrong and the question could be called, and the motion to debate, study, report draft, or whatever was happening, would come to an abrupt, unceremonious, and totally acrimonious end. That was the only effective, if not exactly legitimate, way of ending a filibuster.

In Motion No. 18, we are defending the right to filibuster.

As I said, Motion No. 18 is about defending the rights of the opposition, informed by our experience in the third party. Not one line of this motion benefits a majority government. All, however, benefit the improved functioning of this place. I look forward to its passage.

• (1230)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify one common misrepresentation, which is the government brought a discussion paper. Clearly, it brought a motion to PROC and it was going to use its majority to vote it through.

When we talked about the Standing Orders in the House, I gave a speech. A lot of members have ideas about Standing Orders. I think of the myriad of things we could change to make things work better, such as when bills are introduced at first reading, all parties would stand, give speeches, and say they all agree. Then we continue to have second reading, it goes to committee, and on and on. Why do we not just send it to the Senate? There are so many ideas. We could have votes every day after question period and that could be put in place forever, so we would not have these family unfriendly votes late at night, all those kinds of things.

With all the changes that could have been made, could the member comment on why the government picked these ones as the priority?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, they were in our platform and we committed to do them.

I would like to discuss the other items, and we did in fact propose a discussion. The motion was to create a discussion. I was there for it. I co-wrote the motion with the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame. It was very important to have a discussion on how to do these very things, but we never did get to that. We had a filibuster.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to build on the previous question. When we presented the discussion paper, some items in the discussion paper made it into the motion and some did not. There was opportunity, as my colleague across the way said, to have others.

Could the member explain to Canadians a little more on the value of putting forward a discussion paper, opening it up for parliamentarians to have some input on, and then presenting a motion here at this point, with which we will move forward?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we hoped to have a discussion to build on the ideas, to perhaps invite witnesses to discuss how it was done in other countries, and to see what other people did.

What ended up coming out of this was a few things committed to in the platform, rather than the very wide range of things coming out of Standing Order 51 debate. There were things the opposition members themselves wanted to discuss but did not actually want to discuss.

The process did not work as I would have liked. However, this is where we are. We have a motion that will improve the rights of members in the House. It is very worthwhile and very important to proceed with this.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite amusing to hear my colleague opposite talk about discussions, when an agenda cloaked in white, purity, and sunny ways was shamelessly imposed on us in a major way. Today, as an NDP member, I have to mention the Senate, which has said that the infrastructure bank should not be included in omnibus bills. I am even citing the Senate, which goes to show how much everyone agrees.

In my opinion, it is ridiculous for the government to claim to be a new breath of fresh air for democracy when it is imposing a monstrous bill, inserted in an omnibus bill, to make its pals happy.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what pals he is talking about.

Bill C-44 was introduced as part of the budget. We made it very clear in the budget that we were going to create the infrastructure bank. Our plans to do that were clear. The infrastructure bank is a way of investing and creating a good fund that will make it possible to invest in infrastructure across the country.

In my riding of Laurentides—Labelle, there is a significant need for infrastructure. In many cases, the money for infrastructure just is not there. The infrastructure bank will help in such cases, and that is why it is extremely important for the development of infrastructure and of the country.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sat in on the PROC committee meeting, which was filibustered for almost 700 hours. There was a lot of concern about how we needed to have a discussion, but the opposition members did not bring forward any ideas. They only said why they did not like it.

How can we avoid this in the future? How can we have those discussions, rather than a filibuster, with some members saying they do not like what has been brought forward?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, that is an easy one. If the opposition came to the table as honest brokers and came to the government to discuss this, which is what we were looking for, we would have had a much more productive discussion and it would have resulted in a motion. If they did not agree with it, they could have filibustered at that point. However, at least we would have had the discussion.

The best way of going forward is by having everybody come to the table and being honest with their opinions.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my colleague for Chilliwack—Hope.

First, I am so pleased to hear that our colleague for Scarborough—Agincourt will be speaking again, and that this was not his last speech today.

I rise today to speak to Motion No. 18, the government motion mostly about the estimates process and the government's shameful

move to reduce parliamentary oversight by changing the tabling and reporting dates of the main estimates. It is the government's misguided and cynical attempt to change the estimates process so it appears it is trying to do something, anything actually.

How did we get to this point?

Over a year ago, the Treasury Board President appeared in the operations and estimates committee, OGGO, to discuss the difficulty in understanding the estimates process. We discussed the alignment of the estimates to the budget, accrual versus cash accounting, and the unclear reporting of the departments. He proposed a solution, which was an odd one. His solution to all of these problems was to simply take away two months of oversight by moving the tabling of the estimates to May 1 from March 1, allow zero time for the opposition to study the estimates before choosing the two committees of the whole, and take away a few supply days. This was supposed to be the solution to the issue of the estimates being difficult to understand. If members do not understand the process, then surely the government will give them less time. That must be solution.

Despite the government having proved completely unable to fix its own internal administrative processes, the President of the Treasury Board decided the solution was to take away two months of oversight on the estimates. We were told that changing the Standing Orders to allow the government to move the tabling of the estimates from March 1 to May 1, leaving parliamentarians just over a month before the estimates were considered reported, would allow the government to ensure more of the budget would be in the estimates.

We asked the Treasury Board President about these concerns in committee and we were told not to worry, that we could change the Standing Orders back in a couple of years. We were told not to worry about having only five sitting weeks in May and June to review the estimates. The Liberals would guarantee that ministers would show up to all committee meetings regarding the main estimates. To quote the committee evidence, the President of the Treasury Board stated "You have my personal commitment, but also the commitment of our government, to make sure that is the case", that the ministers will show up.

The current Minister of Public Services is on leave and the department in an absolute mess. There is the Liberal Phoenix fiasco. There is the Liberals's on-again, off-again love affair with Boeing, which is truly sad. In Paris right now the love affair is off. It is very odd that the city of love cannot get back the love affair with Boeing. There was the scandal of the Liberal Party executives deleting emails in Shared Services Canada, reminiscent of Hillary Clinton. Then there is the ongoing shipbuilding delays that are costing taxpayers billions.

Government Orders

Therefore, with all of this going on, do members think the fill-in minister, if anyone even knows who that person is, or the parliamentary secretary would show up for the estimates? I am pretty sure members can guess what the answer is: No. The first chance the government had to put its money where its mouth was and we ended up with the deputy minister of Public Services and Procurement representing the minister. It was not that the deputy minister did not do a great job. We got all the same nonsensical answers we would have received from the minister herself, but it was the principle of the thing.

Kin Hubbard, the American satirist, had an oft-quoted line, “When a fellow says, 'It ain't the money but the principle of the thing,' it's the money.” In this case, it is both; it is the principle and the money, taxpayer money.

Another well-known and similar quote from H. L. Mencken is, “When somebody says it's not about the money, it's about the money.” Now Mencken was a very influential and prolific journalist in America during the Depression era. He wrote a lot about the shenanigans and shams of con artists in the world. He would have had a lot of fun writing about this, because shams of con artists were his specialty.

The government is saying that to improve transparency, we must decrease transparency. In order to give more power of oversight to parliamentarians, we must first take away oversight to parliamentarians.

We told the Treasury Board President that if there was an alignment issue, why not move the budget up to an earlier fixed date? This was recommended by the all-party OGGO report in 2012 on the estimates. He told us that it was not possible due to timing issues. Therefore, we have two rulings on timing issues; unilaterally changing the Standing Orders on estimates is good, changing timing for the budget is bad.

Before anyone thinks this is just a partisan rant about the government, it is not just me who thinks the government is completely wrong on the issue. The PBO noted:

Before agreeing to the changes proposed by the Government, parliamentarians may wish revisit the core problem that undermines their financial scrutiny: the Government's own internal administrative processes.

● (1240)

The PBO was in committee just this morning and again noted that moving the date would have little to no effect on alignment if the internal processes on budget and spending approval are not reformed, which is not happening. He further stated that taking away time for MPs to scrutinize government spending, as this motion would do, would be of no benefit at all to Parliament or to oversight by parliamentarians. The PBO proved this point by pointing out in a supplementary estimates analysis how many new budget measures appeared in each supplementary estimate.

In the 2016 supplementary estimates (A), 70% of new spending announced in the budget was in the supplementary estimates (A). If we go a year closer, with all the hard work they put into it, we see a new total of just 44% in the supplementary estimates (A). Incredibly, in response to this failure, the TBS president said it was “progress”.

We asked the minister to share his plans to reform the internal process and achieve alignment, and he refused, referring instead to his four-pillar discussion paper as a “concrete plan”, in his words. That is the same paper the PBO just this morning inconveniently noted was not a plan, since it had nothing concrete in it to address the process issues.

We further asked the TBS president if he would follow parliamentary tradition and make no changes to the Standing Orders without unanimous consent of the opposition parties. He said—well, actually, he did not say.

My learned colleague from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, who is our committee chair, asked repeatedly if, as was the long-held custom, the TBS president would commit to changes to Standing Orders only if he had all-party support. It was like asking the Prime Minister how many meetings he had with the Ethics Commissioner. All we got was non-answers.

Now we know why he would not answer such a simple question: they planned all along just to ram the changes down the throats of the opposition. What is next when this little experiment fails? Will it be further reduction in oversight?

In committee, the Treasury Board president trotted out a line from an interview with Kevin Page, the former PBO, as justification for his plans. He quoted Kevin Page as saying, “I support your recommendation that this adjustment may take two years to implement.” There was nothing about its being a good idea; it was just that it would take two years to implement. What the Treasury Board president did not know, however, were a couple of other thoughts from Kevin Page, also in a *Globe and Mail* interview. The former parliamentary budget officer stated:

The recommendations for change in the discussion paper seem to have come from a public servant's perspective.

It is not from a parliamentary perspective or a perspective of oversight to protect taxpayers, but from a public servant's perspective.

The article continues:

The report does not start from the perspective of the financial-control responsibilities of Parliament.

With great respect to [the Treasury Board president]...the specific proposals in the report do not go far to strengthen Parliament's financial control.

The current PBO said of the proposed estimates changes:

With respect to delaying the main estimates, the Government indicates that the core impediment in aligning the budget and estimates arises from the Government's own sclerotic internal administrative processes, rather than parliamentary timelines.

The PBO further noted that:

...the Secretariat is further away from its goal in 2017-18, rather than closer to it. This raises a significant question of whether the Government's proposal to delay the main estimates would result in meaningful alignment with the budget.

In response to these learned experts, the minister said he did not agree with every utterance from the PBO. Those are his exact words: utterances.

On this side of the House, we believe we should pay attention to such utterances. Reducing oversight of spending for no gain does not serve Canadian taxpayers, nor does it serve parliamentarians. I strongly urge the government to withdraw its damaging changes to the estimates timing.

• (1245)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back a bit in history and ask the hon. member how many times the Mulroney Conservative government unilaterally changed the Standing Orders. Was it between 50 and 60 times or 60 and 70 times?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a little history lesson: it was a Progressive Conservative, not a Mulroney Conservative question.

Perhaps I would like to invite the member to get into his DeLorean and go back to the future to today's discussion. We are not talking about what happened decades ago. We are talking about the current government's attack on our rights of oversight of parliamentary spending. It is shameful that every time we bring up these issues of unparliamentary attacks on the parliamentary budget officer and our right to oversee spending, the Liberals go back to, "What about 30 years ago? Did not Mulroney do this? Did not Harper do that?"

In this House, we are here to discuss today's Motion No. 18. I would suggest that the Liberals stick to it; if they did, they would see it is a bad motion and they would withdraw—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to know if he really finds it transparent and democratic to table Motion No. 18 in the final days of this Parliament.

Indeed, we have been sitting for weeks until midnight, probably because the Liberals were unable to obtain agreement from all parties to implement this major reform to our Standing Orders. They wanted to do it on the pretext of holding discussions with everyone. They wanted to impose it on us, but they had to back down on certain measures that were supposed to improve work-life balance.

I must say that it has been very difficult in my home for the last month with a three-year-old little girl. We have worked and had votes in the evening every evening for more than a month. We sit until midnight and we begin the same thing again the next morning.

We do all that, but very few bills have been passed by the House, because the Liberals took so much time putting everything in place. Then we need to support, vote on, and pass all that. There are very few people in civil society who are aware of all these changes.

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How can we say that it is democratic and transparent when it is done in this fashion, by ramming it through?

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, that was a very good question from my colleague from the NDP, and she brought up a lot of very valid points. The perfect word that she used was "pretense", and that is what the Liberals are operating under. Every time this government stumbles or cannot get motions or bills through, it makes a power grab. It does it under the pretense of "modernization" or making it "family friendly".

It is very clear that people on this side of the House—my colleagues from the NDP, the Bloc, the Green Party—and the public in general see this motion for what it is. It is a cynical attempt to reduce our rights. It is a cynical attempt by the government to delay and block our ability to provide proper oversight on its spending and its actions, and that is shameful.

One day this government will fall, and either the Conservative Party or perhaps the NDP will be in power. The Liberals then will want the same protection from a government changing the rules without unanimous consent that we are demanding here now. Again, I strongly suggest to the government that it go back to tradition and get unanimous consent from all opposition parties before it changes the way we operate in this House.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the debate has been fractious at times and I know there is a bit of bad blood, but I am of the view that regardless of our partisanship, we agree more than we disagree. In the spirit of co-operation, I understand the member would like to see a better alignment between the budget and the estimates process and I think we all would like better financial scrutiny of the estimates process.

The member mentioned the PBO report, and he mentioned three items in the OGGO report: presentation of initiatives, timing of new budget measures, and differing accounting assumptions and scope. I recognize that it is not a complete answer and that there is work needed on the government's end to better align the estimates and the budget process, but is this not one piece of the puzzle? Does the member not think so?

• (1250)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, it is the end part of the issue. We are putting the cart before the horse in changing the estimates tabling process. We have to get the processes right so that we have clear reporting and clear documentation on the spending.

The parliamentary budget officer, both in the report on the supplementary estimates (A) and in his previous report from last year commenting on the government's attempt to change the estimates process, made it very clear that the issue is not with the timing in aligning the estimates with the budget; the problem is with the bureaucracy not getting the programs out in time. Changing the estimates and reducing our oversight will have zero value until the government gets its act together with its processes.

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Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again in the House to debate an important issue.

Canadians tuning in today can perhaps be forgiven if they are wondering what Motion No. 18 means. Most probably do not give a lot of consideration to what the Standing Orders mean and how they affect their lives, but this motion is really about accountability and transparency of government and of the House of Commons. That is what we are debating today.

After several months, the government has finally put forward some proposals to change the Standing Orders, and it is important for people to understand how we arrived at this point and how we arrived at the proposals that are on the table today.

The road that we are on began over a year ago, when the government proposed Motion No. 6. The government was frustrated with the opposition for opposing its legislation and its attempts to change our laws. We were doing our job, but the government became frustrated with that, so it brought in Motion No. 6, which was by all accounts a draconian motion to take away the rights of the opposition, thereby disenfranchising the people that we represent, the millions of Canadians who voted for parties other than the governing party. We were sent here to do an important job; certain members of the government understand that, while others clearly need a reminder.

We saw what happened when the Prime Minister's anger boiled over. He came down to this end of the chamber, made contact with one member, grabbed another one, and we spent days debating his violation of the parliamentary privileges of members of the House. Only because of the Prime Minister's unparliamentary outburst did the government withdraw Motion No. 6 at the time, and we went back to operating under the normal Standing Orders that give opposition members their rights in this place.

We then came to March of this year and a supposed discussion paper. I listened with some amusement to the previous Liberal speaker and questioner talking about how this was just a discussion paper and how the government had no agenda. In fact, we heard from the previous speaker that freedom now reigns in committees and the Liberals are just operating as a bunch of free agents. They do not have any direction from the Prime Minister's Office or from ministers' offices. They just act on their own goodwill and good ideas.

Of course, the discussion paper was tabled on a Friday afternoon before a break week. Then, two hours later, a motion was presented calling for discussion of the paper that had just been discovered, just been translated, just been tabled before Canadians.

I guess an idea popped into the head of the member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame to bring this discussion paper before the procedure and House affairs committee with a firm deadline for the committee to report back to the House on these changes by June 2. It was essentially holding a hammer over the heads of opposition members. We could talk about it all we wanted, except here was the deadline, here were the terms, and here was what was going to happen.

We in the opposition exercised our rights as opposition members to hold the government accountable and to use the tools at our disposal to draw Canadians' attention to these changes.

What did the Liberals propose to do in these changes? They proposed to cancel Friday sittings, thereby reducing accountability by 20%. The House would sit for fewer days.

They proposed that the Prime Minister would only be in the House for 45 minutes a week, for question period on Wednesdays. They also proposed to cut speaking times in half and have five-minute speeches instead of 10-minute speeches, because we all know how easy it is to get complex matters discussed in five minutes. Perhaps members of the government are wishing they had implemented that already, as I have reached that point in my speech right now.

The Liberals also proposed electronic voting, meaning that we would no longer have to stand and be counted. I can tell the House that from this vantage point, I have several times seen Liberal backbenchers making up their minds as the roll call was coming to them. As they had to stand and be counted, they realized either through their own conscience or through the pressure of their peers what they should do. It is important that we stand and be counted and be recorded here in the House of Commons.

● (1255)

The government proposes eliminating the ability of MPs to bring up and sustain debate at committees. We have seen the member for Lakeland do an admirable job of using the immigration committee to talk about the government's false reasons for closing down the Vegreville case processing centre. Through her efforts at committee, we have exposed the fact that the government rationale for that decision was false, that the cost savings were manufactured, that in fact it would be costing taxpayers much more money to shut down that system. We never would have had that debate if the government had had its way and eliminated the ability of MPs to do that.

The government also wanted to eliminate the ability of MPs to be able to bring up concurrence motions, to be able to debate committee reports here. We have had important debates many times in this session. Just yesterday, we talked about the Official Languages Act and got to talk about the fiasco that was the Liberals' appointment process for the Commissioner of Official Languages. These were their proposals. We are now left, after weeks of debate and weeks of the opposition using the strategic and procedural tactics available to us to draw attention to this and slow it down. The government has finally put forward this thin gruel of Standing Order changes.

It is not just members of the opposition who have taken offence to how this has been conducted. The member for Malpeque, a long-standing, respected member of this Parliament, who has sat at the cabinet table, who has sat in the official opposition, who has sat in the third party and is now on the government benches, but as a backbench member of Parliament, quite clearly said:

This is the House of Commons. It's not the House of cabinet. It's not the House of the PMO. It's the House of Commons. It's the people's House, and the majority of the people in that House are not members of Cabinet.

Those are wise words, and I wish that government members, members of the Liberal caucus, would heed them.

Government Orders

The member also said the following:

I know there is some upset in my own party over the way things are at, at the moment, that the environment seems to be somewhat toxic. But opposition are using the only levers of power they have at the moment, and I understand that; I've been there.

The member for Malpeque understands that we do not unilaterally change the rules of the game to benefit the majority, that the rules are there to protect the minority.

Again, the government has time after time shown that it is actually more interested in having an audience than an opposition. The member for Malpeque served in the government of Jean Chrétien. It is unfortunate that the government does not follow that example. Jean Chrétien was a tough guy. There was no love lost between him and the opposition. He realized that this place served a purpose, that members of the opposition served a purpose. Before there were any changes to the Standing Orders, he struck an all-party committee, in which the government did not have the majority, to look at things that could be agreed upon to change.

This happened again in the previous Parliament. Everyone talks about Harper ramming through this and ramming through that. When it came to the Standing Orders, he respected the rules and he respected the opposition, and there was no change made if there was no agreement; the issue was not brought forward. That was the record of Stephen Harper. We know that the government will not follow Stephen Harper's example on that, but they should follow Jean Chrétien's example.

I want to address just one of the issues: the Prime Minister's question period. The government says this has to be done to enact their campaign commitments. However, Prime Minister's question period is nowhere to be seen in Motion No.18. I do not know why. Perhaps it is because the Prime Minister has the ability to answer as many questions as he wants without changing the Standing Orders. Maybe he has finally come to that realization. Perhaps it is not going too well when he has to answer time after time, for instance, how many times he met with the Ethics Commissioner. He refuses to answer time after time.

We have come to this place. This is thin gruel. There is not much there. What is there, again, is done without the consent and co-operation of the opposition.

● (1300)

We think that there are possibilities to make changes here, but we believe that the government should have come to the table with a more willing attitude to work with the opposition and only make those changes that could be agreed to by all the major parties in this place.

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague across the way carefully to understand exactly what message he is trying to get across and what his frustration is. I am confused. The government put forward a discussion paper to start a discussion. We have heard that said several times today. I hear the laughter on the other side, but immediately following the discussion paper, almost within hours, we were hearing misinformation, misinterpretation from the other side of the House being asked in question period and being thrown at this side. There was no interest in having a true discussion.

I am going to address one of the points that the member raised. Why was the Prime Minister looking to try and have one day in QP and then be absent the rest of the week? I heard that over and over again in QP. It was completely not the intent of the government. The government's intent was to add time to have the Prime Minister answer questions.

I am hearing him again today clearly not having the right information, continuing to express this rhetoric. How did the member opposite come to that kind of a conclusion? What evidence and information was provided that said the Prime Minister was just going to stand up once a week to be available for questions?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, when there is a motion put forward at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs within hours of the discussion paper, with an imposed deadline when those discussions would be referred back to the House, she will forgive us if we do not take the government at face value that it is just an open discussion. An open discussion could go on for years if we wanted it to, but when the Liberals had that firm deadline, that was the hammer over the head of the opposition.

In terms of the laughable need that the government House leader proposed, that we needed to change the Standing Orders for the Prime Minister to have his own question period, the Prime Minister can answer every question every day if he wants to. He has done it several weeks in a row. We quite enjoy it. I do not think he enjoys it very much, which is why it is not in the motion any longer. Once that is codified in the Standing Orders, and again it has been removed, it gives the government cover to have the Prime Minister not in the House except for that single day. We said the Prime Minister should answer all the questions he wants, he does not need to ram changes down the throats of the opposition to do it.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, unfortunately, have been one of those who had a ringside seat for this whole process from beginning to end and I agree with the member entirely when he does a recap. This whole thing speaks to complete ineptitude on the part of the government. All the problems we have had here have come from the government and most of them because the Liberals do not seem to know what the heck they are doing.

They brought in Motion No. 6, and as was pointed out, the Prime Minister's actions caused that to be reversed pretty darn quick. Then they brought out their famous discussion paper and it is absolutely true that the motion that followed was within hours and it had a deadline. They then pulled that back after we wasted six weeks on a filibuster that the opposition did not call for. The government caused that 24/7 filibuster and the Liberals know it was their doing.

What did the Liberals do at the end of six weeks? They withdrew the whole thing. It seems to me that when we finally looked at what is in front of us, it looks to me like the first thing the government did was fold, then it refolded on the second go-around, now it seems to have folded on the refold of the fold. Could the member comment on how much folding the government seems to be doing here?

Government Orders

•(1305)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, the only good thing that came out of the government's ineptitude and the government's exercise to try to ram down the throats of the opposition these changes to the Standing Orders was that the member for Hamilton Centre had more time at committee to share his wisdom, which he has just done with the House. The government has completely botched this effort.

There are things that we should do to modernize the House. If there were not that hammer over the head of the opposition, if there actually had been a good-faith effort to find ways to work together as parliamentarians, not as the Liberal government here with its new wisdom that needed no precedent, that it knew all and knew better, if the Liberals were here to change the way things work, if they had worked with the opposition in a good-faith effort, we would not be here where we are today with this thin gruel. After an entire spring session of wasting the time of the House to come up with Motion No. 18, it is quite frankly an embarrassment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

There have been discussions among the parties and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing or Special Order, when no Member rises to speak on Government Business No. 18 or no later than 1:59 p.m. today, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until later today, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Having said that, it only leaves me 10 minutes to cover this issue and that is just not enough time. However, I will give it my best shot.

Motion No. 18 is actually a very encouraging and positive motion. I would encourage all members of this House to recognize the value of this particular motion. If we take a look at the five aspects that I want to highlight, one only needs to look back to the last federal election. The Prime Minister made it very clear that he wanted to implement changes to House rules inside the House of Commons and to make some changes that would ultimately ensure there is a higher sense of accountability and a higher sense of transparency.

What we find in Motion No. 18 are changes to our Standing Orders that will in fact improve the conditions in the House. One of the issues that the Prime Minister talked a great deal about was prorogation. We have had a number of members make reference to it. There is a reason why prorogation became a major issue. Others

have commented on it. Suffice it to say that the most encouraging aspect of what we are doing with respect to that is that a prime minister will no longer be able to walk across the street to the Governor General's house, have a session prorogued, and have nothing ever come of it in terms of any sense of accountability.

Through this change, there will be an obligation for the procedure and House affairs committee to deal with the issue, if at any point in time in the future a prime minister goes to the Governor General and asks for prorogation. That is something that was committed to in the last federal election. That is something this Prime Minister and this House are being asked to put into place, which I would strongly encourage members to do.

We have talked about the inappropriateness of the use of omnibus bills. This is something that has been somewhat controversial. I have been quoted by members in the opposition on some of the words I said when I was in opposition, and rightfully so. While I was in opposition, there were budgets bills and other pieces of legislation in which we saw an abuse of the idea of what an omnibus bill was actually meant to do.

At times, omnibus bills are questionable, and that is one of the reasons why we are enabling the Speaker to have more authority to ensure there are opportunities for members to vote on different sections of these bills, if in fact the Speaker deems it.

I have heard members talk about our budget bill. The example they give is the infrastructure bank that is being established. They have been using that as their class one example of the government having an omnibus bill. I would suggest that, if members really look into it, they will find that it has a direct link to the budget. After all, even in the budget we talk about the importance of the billions of dollars that we are investing in infrastructure. We make reference to the infrastructure bank. It only stands to reason that we would have that in the budget implementation bill.

Having said that, we recognize that there needs to be more authority and power given to the Speaker in addressing issues of this nature. This would be a change in the Standing Orders. I would think that all members of the opposition would support that.

Then what we are doing is giving strength to our committees. The Prime Minister made a comment and commitment that we should not have parliamentary secretaries voting at our standing committees. I am a parliamentary secretary, and I believe that is a positive move. We are codifying that. We are saying, in the Standing Orders, that parliamentary secretaries will not be able to vote in the standing committees. They will have a role to play, but they are not going to be able to vote.

•(1310)

I would think the opposition members would see that as a positive thing and support it.

Government Orders

We are talking about improving financial oversight. I served in the Manitoba legislature for many years, where a budget was presented, and following that budget presentation we would go into the estimates. We are talking about doing something of a similar nature here, postponing the estimates until after the budget has been presented on the floor of the House. That is a way that we can ensure a higher sense of accountability with respect to the budget, if we know those debates and discussions will occur after the budget has been presented. I suggest to members that many Canadians might have thought that would have been the case. It is something that is long overdue, and has been talked about a great deal. Listening to the members opposite provide comment on that aspect, I would expect that all members would be voting in favour of that change.

Increasing accountability for question period was another commitment this Prime Minister made to Canadians. We are so appreciative of the fact that Canadians supported our platform commitments relating to change. This is one that I thought was something the opposition members would have jumped all over. The Prime Minister has said that he would answer all questions from beginning to end of that question period. However, the Conservatives have been saying they do not want the Prime Minister to show up only once a week. Not one Liberal MP has argued that the Prime Minister would be here only once a week; it is only the Conservatives who want to argue that. That surprises me. We believe that the Prime Minister is providing more accountability by doing that. We will respect what we are hearing from the opposition, and going forward this government will make that commitment because we believe it is a good, positive thing for the Prime Minister to not only answer the first question but also the last question as much as is possible. When I sat in opposition, I was never really afforded the opportunity for my question to be in the top nine questions, which were the questions that Stephen Harper would usually answer. With these changes, even if a member is the 20th person to ask a question, he or she can ask that question of the Prime Minister. I think that is a positive thing.

Although, we are not codifying that in the Standing Orders, I would like to hear more encouraging words from the opposition with respect to the benefits of that, because I believe that Canadians who truly have an understanding of what is taking place in the House would look at not only that change but also the changes to the rules that we are making and see them for what they are. It was a promise that was made in the last election, and by all accounts it is a promise that has been kept.

That leads me to the discussion paper. We have a government that was open to changing other rules. We had a discussion paper. Members can call it whatever they like, but I would suggest that this has been a government that has opened its doors, talked with members, and invited them to encourage a dialogue with respect to changing the Standing Orders, whether it was the government House leader or PROC members. What has been interesting is that, as I listened to many of the members today and yesterday, I had the sense that there was a bit of regret on their part that maybe we could have made some other changes. One member who had an infant asked about the voting rules and why we would have to sit at nine o'clock. Why did we not allow for that discussion to take place? We on this side of the House were prepared to do that. We wanted to look at ways in which we could improve the rules in our Standing Orders. It

was the members of the joint opposition that made the decision that they did not want that. However, we as a government wanted to ensure that those commitments that were made to Canadians would be kept. That is the reason why we are debating Motion No. 18 today.

I would encourage all members of this House to respect what Canadians want and vote in favour of Motion No. 18.

• (1315)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his creative imagination.

It seems to me there is such a difference between what the Liberals say and what they do. I heard that in the member's speech. They say they want to improve the transparency and accountability of the budgeting process, but they are taking a murky estimating process and shortening the time to look at it. They say they want a beneficial relationship in committees, when giving parliamentary secretaries a presence in them is increasing the influence of the government majority on committees. They pretend that they really wanted to have a discussion when the motion was brought to drive a deadline in the government's agenda by its majority on committees.

Does the member think the reason that Canadians are not buying any of this is that there is such a difference between what Liberals say and what they do?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that is just not true. What the member just put on the record is just not true. The government had a position, and Motion No. 18 comprises the commitments given by the Prime Minister while campaigning in the last election. That is what Motion No. 18 is all about.

We went further than that, in the hope that the opposition would see the merits of looking at other rules changes. With the combined efforts of the official opposition working with the New Democrats, they chose to say no to additional changes. I would love to have this discussion in many different forums. There is so much more that we could have done. Who knows, maybe a day will come when we will be able to make changes on which we could all work together.

Members should not kid themselves. The government House leader and the government opened their arms to get feedback and make changes that would have improved all aspects of the chamber.

• (1320)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was an interesting speech from the parliamentary secretary. It reminds me of the mouse that roared, when I think of all the promises the government made about all the changes it was going to make.

By the way, let me also say that if anybody should be as upset as opposition members, it ought to be the backbench members of the government who are now in a position of ramming through unilateral changes to our Standing Orders against our tradition, with content that amounts to cotton batting. They should be really upset.

Government Orders

I could pick any issue for my question, but I will pick prorogation. The member said and the Liberals promised that they would end the improper use of prorogation. What they want to put in place is that, after the fact, there has to be an excuse given. I was here when a prime minister used prorogation to run away from a confidence vote, the most egregious misuse of prorogation. I would like to know what aspect of what the government is bringing in now would have any impact on a prime minister abusing prorogation in that fashion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, when I listen to a number of the members comment across the way, I detect a little regret possibly on their part. That would have been a wonderful discussion to have at the procedure and House affairs committee when Liberals presented a discussion paper. There could have been dialogue not only on that aspect of it but on many other aspects that were being suggested, with the idea that the PROC committee could have reported back to the House with a more wholesome report. However, it was the combined opposition that chose not to do that. They literally chose. As a direct result, Motion No. 18 is the fulfillment of a commitment that the Prime Minister made to Canadians in the last federal election.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for splitting his time with me. I am pleased to stand up and give my thoughts on the motion before us today.

We have heard a lot of discussion from Liberal members. They keep on referring to the fact that it was just a discussion paper. “What is the matter with the opposition? It is just a discussion paper. We just wanted to have a discussion. These were just ideas.” What they conveniently forget to look at is the Trojan Horse that discussion paper was riding in, and that was the motion that was moved at the procedure and House affairs committee just a few days after the discussion paper came out, and imposed a timeline on when the committee was to complete its study. It was basically putting us into a straitjacket, and we know that with the Liberal majority on committee, they could have basically gotten any change they wanted. They would have reported that back to the House, and then that report, which would have reflected all of the Liberals' wants, would have then just been voted on by this House. We recognized that for what it was, a Trojan Horse, and we used every tool at our disposal to stand up.

There is a lot of alternative history and alternative facts being uttered in this place, but let me remind members that it was the Conservatives, in addition to the NDP, who proposed a reasoned amendment that stated that:

the Committee shall not report any recommendation for an amended Standing Order, provisional Standing Order, new Standing Order, Sessional Order, Special Order, or to create or to revise a usual practice of the House, which is not unanimously agreed to by the Committee.

That is the sticking point that the Liberals refused to agree to. They could not bring themselves to honour the time-honoured practice of this House that when any change is made to the bylaws by which we operate, we usually try to get all-party consensus, because these rules do not affect just the government members, they affect all members, and we all live by these rules. We all deserve their protection, and that is why we sought unanimous consent.

The Liberals refused to budge on that, so what does the opposition do? We use the tools at our disposal. We use the equivalent of pulling the fire alarm, and to this day, Liberals still express confusion as to why we were using all of these dilatory motions. Why were we moving that the member now be heard? Why were we calling ministers in for votes at inopportune times of the day? Because those are the only tools we have at our disposal, and they worked, because we forced the government to climb down, to wave the white flag, and the opposition did its job. Every national paper started running stories on this, the disgrace with which the government tried to unilaterally change those rules.

We will not apologize on this side of the House for using the rules that we need protection with. As soon as the government withdrew that motion, the dilatory motions stopped. What a surprise.

On the discussion paper that came about, what was causing so much consternation on our side was the fact that the Liberals wanted to codify in the Standing Orders the ability to add programming to bills so that they would not have to move time allocation. They wanted to limit the ability of the opposition to move motions during routine proceedings. They wanted to curtail filibusters at committee.

When there is a majority government in the House of Commons, those members have tremendous amounts of power. If only the new Liberal MPs could sometimes see what it is like from this side of the House, how much extreme power they wield in this House of Commons and how few tools we have at our disposal. Those rules are very sacred to this side of the House; they allow us to speak up with the voices of our constituents. For the Liberals to claim they have some sort of legitimacy to proceed with this, let me remind hon. members on that side of the House that the opposition, all parties combined, collectively represent 61% of Canadians. The majority of the population did not vote for the Liberal Party, so our voices deserve to have a say in this House, and we will fight as long and as hard as we can to make sure that we have that right.

We did enter that fiasco of the filibuster, as I like to call it. It spilled out into the House of Commons. We finally got the government to back down, and I am extremely proud of the work that we collectively did. I always say that politics makes for strange bedfellows. Any time that we can get the Conservatives and the NDP working together on something, it must be an important issue to fight for.

● (1325)

I want to go to the motion at hand. We try to reach changes in the House by consensus. What we see before us today in Motion No. 18 is an extremely watered down version. We do not see any substantive changes because, unfortunately, the government ruined its attempt to find those meaningful changes with the ham-fisted way it approached this whole reform package. As a result, here we are with a very watered down version of change in Motion No. 18.

Government Orders

I believe the government House leader claimed her mandate letter gave her some sort of mandate to proceed with changes in the House and how this place operates. The Liberals pursued that change with a lot of vigour initially, starting in March. If only they had had the same vigour for their promise on electoral reform. I can remember, and I think my hon. colleagues will also remember, how many times that promise was uttered, both in the House and out in the Canadian public, that 2015 would be the last election held under first past the post. That was not even worth the paper it was written on.

Let us look at the changes listed in Motion No. 18. The government wants to have the ability, when omnibus bills come before the House, to give the Speaker the ability to make changes so we can have multiple votes on areas that are unrelated to each other. My friend from Beloeil—Chambly has moved an amendment that would also give the Speaker the ability to carve the bill up into separate bills, because if we really want to put an end to omnibus bills that should be the way. The way this motion is written, it does not pay any heed to a 300-page omnibus bill, or 400 or 500 pages. It is all well and good to split up the constituent parts so we can vote on them individually, but it does not stop the fact that we collectively have to debate on a giant bill with the 10 minutes we are given.

Our major source of frustration with this is that it would actually legitimize the use of omnibus bills. The government could just say that because the Standing Orders have been changed, it can just clump everything together because we can vote on it separately, conveniently forgetting the fact that our debate is going to still be constrained to the same amount of time as if it was just one bill.

Another part of the motion is adding parliamentary secretaries to committees. This flies in the face of what the government's promise was. I am lucky enough to sit as the vice-chair on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The two parliamentary secretaries to the minister of justice are very honourable people, and I enjoy working with them, but there is nothing there to prevent them from coming and joining our committee. Parliamentary secretaries, whether they like it or not, are representatives of the executive branch. A committee is a constituent and important part of the legislative branch, and I resist any attempt to have that influence from the executive branch on a legislative committee. We have already given so much power in the House to the executive to allow parliamentary secretaries to now sit on the committee as members. They are not able to vote, but to give them the opportunity to question witnesses, that is our job. We already have so much time devoted to the executive in the House. Ministers can appear before committee if they wish to clarify points. They are allowed to have unlimited speeches when they introduce bills. There is already a tremendous amount of power that rests with the executive.

Finally, the part on prorogation. Let us face it, this is a bit ridiculous. To be able to, within 20 days of a new session, table a statement as to why a government prorogued, what good is that going to do? Whatever the party in power, it could simply spin the reasons and say they did it for this or that reason. There would be no debate on it. It would just be tabled. It does not stop the fact that prorogation, which I know is a constitutionally protected right, still happened. For us to just continue down that path with a simple discussion paper tabled in Parliament, I do not see that as a substantive change.

I see my time is running out, but I will note that the great Stanley Knowles gave an address to the Empire Club in 1957. He stated that the rules are the only thing the opposition has for its protection. The majority has so much power at its disposal, the opposition depends on these rules. I hope Liberal MPs will now understand why we mounted such a stiff opposition. It is all we have in the House. We will go to the wall to defend the rules, and I am proud of the job we did together.

• (1330)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way talks about this deadline in the motion and he uses this as a reason for not debating. I want to point that the deadline that was in motion was over a month. I am a hard-working member on the PROC committee—all of us on that committee are very hard-working. In my view, that provides us with a lot of time and a willingness to work overtime in order to discuss this very important matter.

Then the member refers to these opposition tactics, a motion to adjourn or who is going to speak next, almost in a boastful way. We spent seven days on a question of privilege motion in which the question itself was important, but everybody in the House agreed to move it to PROC.

I wonder if the member is proud of these tactics, which in fact do not respect the value of the time that we have in this House to debate these very important topics. Could that time not have been used in a much better way to have the wholesome discussion to bring improvements to this House, as we have promised Canadians?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, again, the Liberals conveniently forget the fact that the Conservatives moved a reasoned amendment that would have asked that any report require unanimous consent. That was the sticking point.

Do I feel our time could have been better spent? There are very important issues, but when we only have one card left to play in such a stacked game against us, absolutely, I am proud that we played that card, and I would do it again tomorrow, if I could.

• (1335)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the difference between discussions and motions. I am the chair of the status of women committee. This morning we were discussing what we are going to study next. In the middle of the discussion, which was generating a lot of ideas, the Liberals brought a motion to vote on the thing they wanted to study next. That, effectively, ended the discussion, because when we have a motion, we vote on it, and that ends it.

It seems to me that the Liberals are confused about the difference between a discussion and a motion. I wonder if the member would elaborate.

Government Orders

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my friend, the member for Sarnia—Lambton. That is why, at the beginning of my speech, the issue was not so much the discussion paper, it was how it was going about being discussed, the rules of the motion to formulate how this discussion paper was going to go. Absolutely, we had a willingness to do this, but not under the constraints that the government imposed on us.

Again, as I said, we have a very reasonable amendment to the motion made by the Liberals. It required an all-party consent to report whatever was discussed in that discussion paper, whatever is reported back to the House that has the agreement of all parties, as is a time-honoured tradition in this House whenever any substantive changes are made to the Standing Orders.

These are rules for Parliament, for all parliamentarians, for the opposition, most important, not just for the government because the government already wields so much incredible power in this House as it is.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was shocked to hear the member say that he does not see any meaningful changes in Motion No. 18 because Motion No. 18 has a very key change to the timing of the budget and the estimates. As the member probably well knows, currently, the estimates have to be tabled on or before March 1, and the budget is almost always tabled after that, and so parliamentarians who are trying to scrutinize the government's intended spending have a disconnect because the estimates are reflecting the previous year's spending approvals.

This motion does address that. It addresses Standing Order 81. It puts the timing of the estimates six weeks later so the estimates can reflect the budget for this coming year's commitments by government and will empower parliamentarians to do their job in following the money. It is only one step in a longer process of estimates reform that is under way, but it is an important one.

Does the member not believe that it is important for members of Parliament to be able to follow the money and hold government to account?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, the way I read that part of the motion is it simply reduces the amount of time committees have to study the main estimates, from three months to eight weeks. I agree that Parliament should have oversight over the nation's purse. After all, we authorize the money Her Majesty gets to spend. However, I do not agree with giving committees less time to examine the main estimates, which is one of the main concerns we in the NDP have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to speak to the government's Motion No. 18. No one will be surprised to learn that we will vote against this motion, for several reasons that I will have the opportunity to raise in the next few minutes.

To begin this short 10-minute speech, I will be very clear. I am blessed to be one of the Conservative members who will have the opportunity to speak on such an important motion as this one, which aims to change the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. I consider myself lucky because Motion No. 18 was tabled yesterday

and the debate will end in a few minutes, when there were only two hours of deliberations yesterday and we resumed the debate at 11:30 this morning.

I do not have a lot of experience in the House of Commons, as I have only been here since October 2015. However, I have had the opportunity to speak with several of my colleagues who have been here for a very long time, even though none of them have been here since the creation of this beautiful House, of which I am proud to be a part. Never in memory have the Standing Orders of the House been changed by a motion that was hastily moved at the end of a parliamentary session and that divided the members of the House. According to all the comments I have received, this is a first. Moreover, it is quite a first, but it is not at all a credit to the Liberals opposite. It is shameful to act in this way.

Since the October 2015 election, this government seems to be quite unco-operative when it comes to the business of the House. It does not appear to understand its role as the governing party, and more importantly, it does not appear to understand at all the role of the official opposition, which is to ask it to justify each of its decisions.

When I was the mayor of Thetford Mines, I had to justify each of my decisions to the community. If a decision made at a Monday night council meeting did not please the community, I would hear about it the next morning at Tim Hortons, because people would quickly find out about it. Therefore, if, God forbid, at some Monday night council meeting I was unprepared and together we made a bad decision, the next morning, it was we—the councillors and the mayor—who be called to account.

If we became better and made good decisions on a Monday night, it was because not all the councillors supported the mayor's decisions. They understood that their role was to point out the flaws in decisions that were not that well thought out. Therefore, even if we cannot refer to them as the opposition in the same way we do here in the House, having town councillors challenge our decisions made us all better. The following day, instead of being criticized, we were praised by the community, because we had made good decisions.

I appreciated the fact that the councillors did not always agree with me. I appreciated that they approved of some of our decisions and questioned others. That upset us sometimes, since we did not always agree with them, but ultimately these councillors who acted as the opposition made us all better.

This is what the Liberal government does not seem to understand. The role of the official opposition is to improve how this country works and improve the decisions made by all governments, regardless of political stripe, by allowing the official opposition and the other opposition parties to examine them. That is how the House must operate.

What protects the members of the House so they can properly perform this role? Certainly, they sometimes bother the government when they ask questions and criticize it.

Government Orders

● (1340)

We sometimes point out its failings and oversights. We do not always see eye to eye. Sometimes, we prevent the Liberals from keeping their promises because those promises were reckless to begin with. Other times, we would like them to keep their promises, but they always have all sorts of reasons not to. I am sure government members find us incredibly irritating at times, because we do not share their thinking, but that is our role.

What holds us together, what makes it possible for us to fulfill this role for the benefit of all Canadians? The answer is simple: the Standing Orders of the House. Without these rules that allow us to question and challenge the government's decisions and positions, things would slowly but surely turn into a dictatorship, even under another name. Why? Because the government would then be able to do whatever it likes without subjecting itself to the opposition's scrutiny, making all the decisions, good ones and bad, its bad decisions remaining unchallenged.

That is why I am sending this message to my colleagues across the floor who are not in government, but who sit in the House and on committees. They were there when we exhausted all avenues and used every tool at our disposal to make our point that the government cannot do what it wants to the rules of the House. These rules belong to all Canadians, as they serve to protect them from a government whose arrogance might one day reach such heights as to compel it to want to use the full measure of its power to introduce the policy it wants without regard for the opinion of Canadians who might not share its views. That is why we are here in the House.

Motion No. 18 is a manifestation of this arrogance. It has to be said, because this is the first time since October 2015 that I have seen such a lengthy motion. It is written in very small print. When I was mayor, I remember receiving complaints from citizens telling us not to use such small print because it made it difficult to see the big picture. Some of our more senior citizens asked us all the time if we could use larger print. People use small print when they want to make it so others cannot read them. This applies to Motion No. 18. They would rather we did not read it, so it is full of numbers and other stuff. Motions will pass, however, even if they are too wordy. That is the Liberal way. They are always looking for a back door to sneak through, hoping not to rouse the opposition along the way. That is why I now declare, as my opposition colleagues will surely agree, that this will not stand. We will not be fooled by the Liberal government's methods.

Before we vote on this motion, I just want to say that I am very proud to be an MP. It is a privilege to be elected to the House. This government swept to power on a tide of false promises about sunny ways, openness, transparency, and doing things differently. I hope that, by “doing things differently”, it did not mean “doing things unilaterally”.

Unfortunately, ever since last year, Motion No. 6, the infamous discussion paper that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons tabled in the House, the many closure motions the government has imposed, and the partisan appointment processes we have witnessed in recent weeks and months have exposed the

government's blatant lack of respect for the work of opposition members.

Motion No. 18 is essentially the dregs of the government's latest attempts to unilaterally change the rules of the House. The government may have watered things down considerably, but the outcome is the same. It will use its majority to force changes to the House rules without getting consensus, even though there has always been and should always be consensus to change the House rules.

● (1345)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 84 of the House of Commons, at present, the main estimates provide a partial overview of planned spending, given that they are tabled prior to the estimates for the current fiscal year.

By tabling the main estimates in the spring after the budget is presented, parliamentarians could gain a better understanding of how the details of the estimates correspond to the picture outlined in the budget forecasting. This approach also makes it possible to reduce the time between when the budget is presented and when programs can be implemented, thereby increasing the government's ability to deliver results.

Will the member acknowledge that this change will improve the quality and efficiency of the work of MPs, including opposition MPs?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, like all of the government's proposed rule changes, this one might have been acceptable if only it did not limit the amount of time the opposition has to study the actual estimates. It could have been acceptable otherwise.

If the Liberals are so sure that this is the right thing to do, if they are so convinced that this rule change will benefit all parliamentarians, why could they not get a consensus to change the rules and get this change to unanimously pass in the House? That is the real question.

● (1350)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his very fine speech.

I felt like his speech was written with me in mind because he talked about tradition and the founding fathers. I would say to him that from 1864 to 1867, most of the speeches in the House lasted between two to four hours, all night or all day. Now it is extraordinary when someone speaks for 20 minutes. It is a big deal.

This spring, the Liberals tried to use their parliamentary reform to prevent us from speaking for more than 10 minutes at committees. We would not have been able to filibuster to make our view clear and to protect Canadian democracy. They wanted to impose a 10-minute maximum speaking time at parliamentary committees. I would like to know what my colleague thinks of that.

Government Orders

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, here we have a young MP who has things to say and wants to say them not only in the House, but also in committee. There, we have a government that does not want to hear those things, that is not interested in the opposition's comments and suggestions. This government is completely closed to any idea that is not its own.

Then when it is time to have a discussion with the official opposition and the other parties, how can we trust the government when we know that ultimately we are going to end up in the situation we are in today, where a motion will be adopted by the government majority?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I unfortunately did not hear all of my hon. colleague's speech, so I apologize if he went over this. I am looking at the last three weeks, including this one. We have been sitting until midnight in a mad dash to the finish line to try to pass government legislation. Could the member offer some comments on the direct link between what we are doing now and the incredible amount of time the government wasted back in March and April?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, before I respond to my colleague, I would invite him, the next time I give a speech, to listen to it from start to finish because what I have to say is always very relevant.

To come back to his question, we are here today because the government wanted to impose its law and take control of the House of Commons. It wanted to do as it pleased, do things its own way, without taking into account the views of the opposition. That is why we are sitting until midnight. That is why we are spending such a long time debating a question of privilege. Otherwise, the government would have done even more things its own way and imposed even more unacceptable decisions on members. That is why we are doing this.

I will continue to do the same thing as long as I am a member of the official opposition, even though I do not expect that to be very long.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent to resume debate, I must inform him that I will have to interrupt him at about 1:59 p.m. He therefore has about five minutes remaining.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you are in charge of both discipline and the clock in the House of Commons. I trust you will let me know when my time is up.

We are here today talking about this motion to make sure that, if changes do in fact need to be made to the rules of procedure, that they are made consensually.

When it comes to changes to our institutions and the way the House operates in particular, it is important that they be made not according to the wishes of the party in office, but to those of the country as a whole.

We, the 338 members of the House represent all Canadians, whether we are Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats, or members of the Bloc Québécois or Green Party. If changes need to be made, they need to be made in the interests of all Canadians and on behalf of all Canadians.

In 2012 and 2013, when I was a member of the Quebec National Assembly, I worked closely with my political opponents who were articulate, ferocious, and tough. Nevertheless, we worked together to make the changes we deemed necessary to the electoral system at the time. Heaven knows that, today, they are being put to good use.

We are currently going through exactly the same thing because, when we change the voting system or the rules of procedure, we have a direct impact on democratic institutions. From my past experience in the National Assembly, I draw the conclusion that we cannot make changes without consensus. We had consensus on the issues of federal political party financing and provincial election spending, and then when it was time to set a fixed date for elections. Therefore, yes, we are able to do that.

As I said earlier, I faced vigorous opposition, from both the member from Beauce-Sud at the time, Mr. Robert Dutil, or the PQ minister of the day, Mr. Bernard Drainville, who is now a radio commentator. For my part, I worked for the Coalition Avenir Québec. We were all guided by a desire to make changes, but first and foremost by a desire to do so with consensus.

I will always remember the conversations we had following the discussions, coat in hand, to try to find a way together to make those changes with consensus. We found a way. When we are guided by good faith and want to make changes, it can be done with rigour, respect, and especially a desire for consensus.

I find it very bizarre, if not laughable or preposterous, to hear politicians say earlier that they were elected on that promise. May I remind them that there were elected by promising small deficits and saying that they would return to a balanced budget in 2019? May I remind them that the reality today is that those deficits are enormous and that the Prime Minister stated three days ago, without any shame, that he did not even know when we would return to a balanced budget? The Liberals lecture us about their election promises. It is a complete farce.

Since we are discussing the voting system, or in fact the attitudes that we must have as parliamentarians, we must not forget the famous promise, made a thousand times, not just once, that 2015 would be the last election under that system. How many times did we hear our NDP friends repeat that to no end? What did the Prime Minister decide when he realized that the polls were in his favour and that the system worked for him? In the end, he said that Canadians did not really want change.

Today, the Liberals are lecturing us and saying that they were elected on that promise. In their election platform, a very specific article stated that the Prime Minister must spend a full day answering questions in Question Period. They tried it, realized that it did not work for them, and decided to do it later or when it suited them better. I will not say that it is hypocritical, as that is a somewhat harsh term, but what a surprising way to deal with the facts.

Statements by Members

The reality, quite simply, is that the Prime Minister tried to answer the 40 questions put to him every day during question period. Obviously, talking and answering are very different things. Everyone remembers the 18 times we asked the Prime Minister a very simple question and he was never able to answer. No later than last week, nine times we asked very specific questions to the Prime Minister about the Norsat scandal, and he was unable to answer directly.

The Liberals want to lecture us about parliamentarianism. They need to ease up a bit. Whenever they want to bring amendments forward, they need to find a consensus. They will not accomplish anything by imposing long motions on us and giving us just a few hours to debate them. We need to work together beforehand, find some common ground and be willing to compromise. That is how we achieve meaningful results. That is not what is happening now.

•(1355)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:59 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings.

Pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 18 are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until later today, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in what is undoubtedly my last opportunity to address the House in the Standing Order 31 rubric for the next 60 seconds, I want to pick up on the debate we have been having today about changing our Standing Orders and also pick up on the fine words of the member for Scarborough—Agincourt in this place last week about how to improve decorum in the House.

There are three things that could be done that would be salutary and would not require changing the Standing Orders.

The first would be for the Speaker to ignore the lists that come from whips. That is a matter of convention and not a rule. The Speaker of the House could decide from among all of us standing and take questions from any member.

The second thing would be to go back to one of our written rules, which says no reading of prepared, canned speeches. This would also improve decorum in the House and ensure that people who speak know what they are talking about.

The last thing we all have in our power to do, and that is to behave ourselves as if our children were watching.

* * *

•(1400)

ABANDONED VESSELS

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last October the House unanimously adopted my

Motion No. 40 on dealing with abandoned and derelict vessels. In October, this was made a part of the oceans protection plan.

I am extremely pleased to rise today to tell the House that on Thursday, June 15, I announced in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, that the abandoned and derelict vessel *Farley Mowat* will be removed.

The *Farley Mowat* was deemed an environmental risk by the Canadian Coast Guard after sinking, being refloated, collecting rain water and snow, and being filled with pollutants. It has been cleared by the Coast Guard to be towed up to 75 nautical miles for disposal.

The removal of the *Farley Mowat* is an example of the hard work and dedication our government has to Canada's coastlines, protecting our waters, and ensuring they are safe and clean, both for today and for future generations.

I would like to thank the residents of the Town of Shelburne for all of their work on this, as well as the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and the Minister of Transport for their dedication to the safety of our waters.

Here is to a *Farley*-free Port of Shelburne for the tall ships festival in August.

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CANTARÉ CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Cantaré Children's Choir, which will be embarking on a two-week tour of the Netherlands, Belgium, and France this July to commemorate Canada's contribution to the Great War.

The Cantaré Children's Choir was formed in 1997 to enrich the lives of Calgary children through the wonder and power of music. Over the years, the choir has earned critical acclaim, awards, and a stellar international reputation for its excellence.

During its upcoming tour, the choir will be visiting and performing at major historical sites such as Vimy Ridge, the Menin Gate Memorial, Passchendaele, and Juno Beach, to honour Canada's contributions and sacrifice in both world wars.

The Cantaré Children's Choir will serve as an excellent ambassador on behalf of Canada.

I would ask members to please join me today in recognizing and thanking the choir for its amazing work and efforts.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE DAY

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have celebrated Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day since my childhood days in the small communities of Chelmsford, Verner, and Field.

Statements by Members

I proudly recognize my ancestors, Nickel Belt pioneers such as my great-grandfather Pierre Aubin, from Saint-Donat, Quebec, who immigrated to Field, Ontario, in 1860.

My great-grandparents Serré, Racine, and Éthier also came to Verner, Cache Bay, and Nickel Belt in 1880 as did the descendants of the Algonquin nation, including my grandmother, Victoire Aubin-Trudel.

I feel it is important to recognize my roots and my heritage, and to pay tribute to everyone who played a key role in Ontario.

I recognize the importance of the work of Jacques and Michelle De Courville Nicol, both of whom have so generously given of themselves in French Ontario.

I am proud to be Franco-Ontarian, to be of Métis descent, and to be a member of the Algonquin nation.

Happy Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. *Meegwetch.*

* * *

[*English*]

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on World Refugee Day, New Democrats recognize the struggle of people around the world forced to flee their homes due to war, violence, and persecution.

When Trump's travel ban was first announced, while the NDP called for action, the Prime Minister tweeted #Welcome To Canada.

We have recently learned that a 57-year-old woman lost her life attempting to cross the border into Manitoba. If the Prime Minister's hopeful words were matched with real action such as suspending the safe third country agreement, a life might have been saved.

Last week, for the first time in 33 years, the Inland Refugee Society of BC turned away a family of asylum seekers due to the lack of resources. Without federal support, it will have to close its doors in the fall.

What is more, the IRB is now adding 1,000 cases each month to its backlog of 24,000, and asylum claims could take 11 years to process. Still, the government refuses to provide additional resources to the IRB.

For the Prime Minister, happy World Refugee Day.

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●(1405)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Governor General's Performing Arts Award is presented each year in the categories of theatre, dance, classical music, popular music, film, and broadcasting.

This year's recipients of the Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award are Jean Beaudin, Yves Sioui Durand, Brigitte Haentjens, Martin Short, and Michael J. Fox. The recipient of the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts is

William H. Loewen. Lastly, the recipient of the National Arts Centre Award is my friend Michael Bublé.

It has been said that the arts, freedom, and creativity will change society faster than politics. Today, the House congratulates our real leaders.

* * *

[*English*]

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to share some news with everyone about how a young entrepreneur was shut down.

A young girl named Lily, who lives close to my riding, was enjoying family time with her father. The two built a lemonade stand together. Lily's plan was to sell lemonade to her neighbours. The five-year-old started off doing just that, selling lemonade, but soon decided to give it out for free, along with water to passing dogs. That was until the government told her that they would be fined, and they had to shut it down.

This is yet another example of government crushing entrepreneurialism and community-building. Lily represents the job creators of tomorrow, the future of this country, and I stand today to recognize Lily and encourage this budding entrepreneurial spirit.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JULIA CHAN

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding Canadian.

[*English*]

Julia Chan cared for her husband, Frank, following his unexpected heart transplant. For 26 years she worked day in and day out to help alleviate his pain and suffering. Following Frank's passing, Julia did not stop. All that love and compassion she gave her husband extended to 400 seniors living in similar circumstances at the Yee Hong Garden Terrace. Residents describe Julia as the heart of their community.

Last month, the national non-profit Canada Cares recognized her as the heart of our country. On May 5, I joined the Hon. David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, to present Julia with this year's national family caregiver award.

[*Translation*]

Canada is a better country because of people like Julia who, through their generous dedication, help others. She is a shining example to us all.

Statements by Members

Let us extend our warmest congratulations to Julia, the recipient of the national family caregiver award.

* * *

[English]

CANADA 150

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canada Day approaches, this historic year has been an opportunity for us all to reflect on the treasures at home.

To gain an even deeper understanding of Canada, the member for Malpeque and I have decided to do a riding-exchange visit. First we thought we would name it “city dreamer meets country mouse”, but we settled on “like an islander in the city.” We will host each other in our respective urban and rural ridings, visit local treasures, sample local fare, and learn more about our respective regions' specific, unique contribution to Canada. I have been told I will learn all about “aggriculture” from my favourite Malpequer. As a new member and as a long-serving member, we each look forward to showcasing what makes our communities so special.

This historic year, let us appreciate the treasures at home and the role diversity has played in strengthening and enriching our Canadian identity.

Here is to Canada 150.

* * *

“PLAY ON” STREET HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Edmonton has many amazing community leaders who help kids be kids, keep young adults on track, and keep the older of us young at heart.

Today I want to shine the spotlight on a community event hosted in Edmonton by the organization Play On. Every year, in partnership with Hockey Night in Canada, Play On sets up the largest street hockey tournament in the world by hosting tens of thousands of Canadians in cities across the country. The largest of those is hosted in the parking lots of West Edmonton Mall in my riding of Edmonton West.

Hockey has always been part of the great Canadian story. Today I want to thank Play On's founder, Scott Hill, for keeping the story going. The NHL season may be over, but as long as organizations like this are around, our future NHL hall-of-famers will always be ready to play on.

* * *

● (1410)

ST. BONIFACE HOSPITAL RESEARCH

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in mid-April, researchers at the St. Boniface Hospital Research centre announced an important scientific breakthrough that could help in the fight against antibiotic-resistant bacteria. PEG-2S, which could help in the fight against antibiotic-resistant bacteria, was developed by Dr. Grant Pierce and Dr. Pavel Dibrov to combat two of the top 10 antibiotic-resistant priority pathogens. This antibiotic is novel in that it does not affect healthy cells. It only targets bacterial

cells that act as a form of energy supply that help the harmful bacteria proliferate.

[Translation]

Although we have to wait until this new drug passes through the necessary steps in order to reach pharmacy shelves, this announcement is important for the international medical community and represents the first potential discovery of a new antibiotic in the past 30 years.

This is a reminder of the impressive work being done every day by researchers at the St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, [*Member spoke in Inuktitut*].

As Jose Kusugak of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami once said, [*Member spoke in Inuktitut*].

I stand in the House today as an indigenous Canadian to honour National Aboriginal Day and to speak in Inuktitut as we celebrate on June 21. We are the first Canadians and Canadians first. As Canada celebrates 150 years of Confederation, many indigenous people recall those years as a dark colonial period of our history. However, we celebrate what Canada has achieved on other fronts, at home and abroad. Our founding beliefs, values, and history are woven with indigenous knowledge and culture. Aboriginal Day is meant to recognize and reflect those shared and intertwined values.

As an indigenous member of Parliament, I am proud of our leadership on reconciliation.

[*Member spoke in Inuktitut*]

* * *

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Refugee Day, and on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, I call upon the Liberals to immediately develop a fully costed, transparent, sustainable plan to provide integration support for refugees, and in doing so, to stop simply offloading costs for long-term refugee support to the provinces; to address the massive 45,000-case backlog of privately sponsored refugees; to establish a permanent standing subcommittee on internally displaced persecuted groups; to address the severe crisis in asylum claim processing times at the IRB; to stop turning a blind eye to the border crossing crisis in places such as Emerson, Manitoba; to pressure the United Nations to eliminate institutionalized discrimination against persecuted minorities within the refugee selection process; and to make the rainbow refugee assistance program, established under the former Conservative government, a regular, ongoing program.

Statements by Members

On World Refugee Day, I affirm that the Conservative Party of Canada will continue to be a voice for the protection of human rights and the world's most vulnerable.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me introduce George Barmaksez, a fine family man. He and his family arrived in Montarville, as the first refugees the parishioners welcomed. The integration with the congregation was impeccable. George now speaks French very well.

Where we live, family is important. In fact, I am also going to talk about Stelpro, a company on the south shore that specializes in heating systems, a company passed down from father to son. It is an example of family, too.

What is the link between the two? George works full-time at Stelpro, two families who care about integration and are a tangible example of success when we invite and welcome Syrians into our communities.

* * *

[*English*]

QUEEN CITY PRIDE PARADE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I once again had the pleasure to march in the Queen City Pride parade. Despite rain, attendance was larger than ever, including a strong NDP contingent. The NDP is proud to have been the first party to call for the legalization of homosexuality, the first with openly gay candidates and MPs, and the first to support gay marriage.

This year, Amnesty International led the parade in Regina to highlight the need for visas for LGBT refugees. I hope the member for Regina—Wascana, who also marched in the parade, took note of this call for government action.

Finally, I want to invite the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle to join the parade next year so we can have all three of Regina's MPs, from all three major political parties, marching to support equal rights for everyone.

* * *

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

MARC BOSCH

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Marc Bosch for his excellent work.

[*English*]

Marc has served as Acting Clerk of this House since 2014 and Deputy Clerk since 2005. I was very fortunate to work with him during my time as Speaker. His guidance, his advice, and his love of this place are truly second to none.

Marc is a generous, non-partisan professional. He is loyal, dedicated, and committed to always doing the right thing. He has demonstrated his sincere devotion since his days as a page, back in 1978. In addition to being recognized by his colleagues all around the globe as president of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, Marc is the co-editor of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, known around here as O'Brien and Bosc. For those of us who find that book just a little too exhilarating, I understand that he is working on a book on birding, which I look forward to reading when he is finished.

In the aftermath of the shooting on Parliament Hill, Marc provided calm and focused leadership to get us through that crisis. He is a strong defender of the rights and privileges of the legislative branch of government.

Marc, I want to sincerely thank you again for your service. We will all miss you sitting at that table, and we wish you the very best in your future endeavours.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

WORLD REFUGEE DAY

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a long-standing humanitarian tradition of providing assistance and protection to refugees the world over.

[*English*]

When communities welcome refugees with open arms and open hearts, they can help create the foundation for a successful transition to Canadian life.

[*Translation*]

It is important for communities across the country to foster a welcoming spirit toward newcomers, including refugees. Today, World Refugee Day is also a good day to recognize the important and generous work done by those who sponsor refugees and help them to settle, integrate, and succeed in Canada.

[*English*]

These individuals totally embody Canada's values of compassion, openness, and diversity.

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, there are some negative and hateful voices against refugees, but they do not represent the majority of Canadians or our values. We will not let those voices discourage us.

I have the honour of working with Canadians and all MPs in the House to ensure that our country is open and welcoming to newcomers and refugees.

*Oral Questions**[English]***MARC BOSCH**

The Speaker: As has just been shown, I know that hon. members will want to join me in thanking Marc Bosch for his exemplary service to the institution during his tenure as Acting Clerk.

[Translation]

I would like to recognize Mr. Bosch's leadership in the House administration during a period of great change, both in the House and throughout Parliament.

[English]

The effect of that leadership was evident last Friday, when hundreds of House administration employees gathered in the Hall of Honour to applaud Mr. Bosch in the Speaker's parade.

[Translation]

Mr. Bosch held this position for almost three years, and despite external difficulties, the House administration not only continued to provide exemplary services to MPs and the institution, but also improved the service delivery model and is now on track to achieve its long-term objectives.

[English]

As Speaker, I have appreciated his procedural acumen, his administrative counsel, the reassurance of his calm demeanour, and his friendship.

Once again, thank you, Marc, for your exceptional service to the House of Commons.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is traditional in Canada to make sacrifices in order to ensure prosperity for future generations, but this Prime Minister is doing the opposite. He is asking the next generation to make sacrifices to pay for his out-of-control spending. He once again confirmed this week that he has abandoned his promise of a return to a balanced budget in 2019.

When will the Prime Minister understand that Canadians do not want to leave an astronomical Liberal debt for our children and grandchildren?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker, Canadians made a very clear choice in the last election. They could vote for a party that was going to balance the budget at any cost with cuts, or vote for a party that would govern by investing in our future, giving more money to the middle class, raising the taxes on the wealthiest 1% and investing in our communities, in public transit, in social housing and in building a better future for our citizens. That is exactly what we committed to

doing and that is exactly what we are delivering to Canadians and future generations.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, Canadians were given a choice, and one of the choices was a modest and temporary deficit. He has broken both of those promises. This means billions more taxpayer dollars spent on paying interest payments to banks and bondholders instead of investing in services, like health care, education, or new tax cuts.

Now we know the Prime Minister is not even going to try to balance the budget, but could he at least try to try, since now we know budgets just do not balance themselves?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is humorous to hear the members opposite talk about investing in health, in education, in infrastructure, when for 10 years they did not do enough of that.

We got elected on a commitment to invest in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am having trouble hearing the Prime Minister. I want to hear all members when it is their turn to speak and preferably not when it is not their turn to speak.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we got elected on a commitment to invest in Canadians, to invest in their future, to lower taxes on the middle class and raise them on the wealthiest 1%, to deliver a Canada child benefit that gives more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families, by stopping to send Conservative cheques to millionaires. That is what we promised.

* * *

*[Translation]***TAXATION**

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps raising taxes on the middle class. He raised payroll taxes as well as taxes on children's activities and small businesses. He even raised taxes on military personnel. He wanted to tax health insurance plans. Now he has his sights set on taxing public transit, carpooling, beer, and wine.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to admit that he is hurting the people he claims to be helping?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can say whatever he wants, but the fact is that we lowered taxes on the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. I should point out that he and his party voted against lowering taxes on the middle class and raising them on the wealthiest 1%.

The Liberal Party, the Liberal government, is lowering taxes on the middle class because the previous government spent 10 years giving the very rich all the advantages.

Oral Questions

●(1425)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not realize this, but his new tax hikes are hurting Canadians who are having trouble paying their bills. However, that is what happens when one only talks about the middle class never having actually lived it.

Wages are stagnating. Canadians are taking on more debt just to keep up. They are getting worried about their homes. Now the Prime Minister is finding new ways to make it harder. New beer and wine taxes, just in time summer, are the latest examples.

Does the Prime Minister think it is fair to keep shaking down middle-class families so he can spend their money on whatever he wants?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, the Conservative government's approach to growth was to give boutique tax exemptions and lower taxes on the wealthiest 1%. The Conservatives focused on helping the rich and hoping—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the hon. member for Edmonton Manning and some other members who are not that far away from him to try and restrain themselves. Soon, I am sure, as it is summertime, members will be home relaxing. Therefore, let us try to stay in a good mood here.

The right hon. Prime Minister has about 20 seconds.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, when the Conservative Party was in government, it focused on helping the richest and not the people who needed help the most. That is why we are so proud of having lowered taxes on the middle class, raised them on the wealthiest 1%, and delivered child benefit cheques to nine out of 10 Canadians families that are bigger and tax free by stopping to send Conservative cheques to millionaires.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives take ensuring the safety of Canadians seriously and we also understand the need to balance those concerns with protection for civil liberties. Unfortunately law enforcement and security agencies sometimes have only mere minutes to react to threats.

The Liberals' new bill is removing the ability of security agencies to take proactive steps when sometimes just seconds matter.

Why does the Prime Minister want to remove the tools our law enforcement and security agencies need to disrupt threats to Canadians before they happen?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to do two things: to protect our rights and freedoms and keep our communities safe. That is the focus of our national security legislation. That is something we are working very hard, with all parties, to ensure we are able to do.

We look forward to recommendations, to advice, to amendments from other parties on how to improve that issue. All Canadians know we need to balance security with rights and freedoms. That is what Canadians expect.

* * *

*[Translation]***ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are waiting for accountability and clear answers, but I think it is too much to hope from the Liberals.

Let us instead look at a document that does not spin as freely as the Prime Minister can. The Liberals' election platform states, "We will ensure that Access to Information applies to the Prime Minister's and Ministers' Offices".

Can the Prime Minister explain which part of his own promise he failed to understand?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are improving government openness and transparency by making the most significant changes to the Access to Information Act since 1983. We are giving the Information Commissioner the power to order the disclosure of government information, and we are extending the scope of the act by including a legislated, proactive disclosure system for ministers' offices, the Prime Minister's Office, and the institutions that offer administrative and other support to Parliament.

We have committed to making the government more open, more accessible and more transparent, which is exactly what we are doing.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is entirely possible that the Prime Minister does not understand some of the things he says, but is he actually telling us today that he did not understand his own electoral platform? Here is the wording of the promise again, "We will ensure that Access to Information applies to the Prime Minister's and Ministers' Offices...", #RealChange.

When the Prime Minister broke his promise on changing the voting system, he blamed the opposition. What is his excuse this time?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike what the member opposite said, we are expanding the act to include a system of legislative proactive disclosure for ministers' offices, the Prime Minister's Office, administrative institutions that support Parliament, and others.

We are, as we always have been, raising the bar on transparency and openness with the first and significant changes to the Access to Information Act, the largest changes made since 1983.

We continue to demonstrate to Canadians our commitment to openness and transparency, and we will keep delivering on that.

Oral Questions

• (1430)

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a term for someone who commits to something in writing and then reneges on that commitment. It is called a con job.

When the Prime Minister got caught selling access to himself and his ministers in exchange for donations to his political party, he decided to let the media attend rather than put an end to the sketchy practice. However, last night, he kicked the media out.

Will there be any consequences for the Liberal Party after it broke the Prime Minister's rule on cash-for-access fundraisers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal level of government has among the toughest laws on fundraising of any level of government in the country. We will—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I cannot hear the Prime Minister's answer. I would ask the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie to please come to order, along with others. We want to carry on with the rest of question period, do we not?

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the strong rules we have with respect to donations to political parties at the federal level. That is why we have actually raised the bar and we have encouraged the other parties to follow suite, to hold our fundraisers in public places, to invite the media, and immediately disclose the list. These are the things the Liberal Party is doing that the other parties have not done yet.

When are they going to start being open and transparent with Canadians as well?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): “Follow suite”, Mr. Speaker?

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister himself said that the problem with their fundraising activities was the secrecy surrounding them. We think that selling access to the minister for partisan gain is the problem. Who would have thought?

Let us focus for a moment on the Liberals' smokescreen. How can the Liberals claim to have done away with secrecy and to have nothing to hide, when they keep the media out of their fundraisers? It does not add up.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will keep striving to make the work we do in Parliament and within our political parties more open and transparent. We encourage hon. opposition party members to participate openly and transparently in the changes we have made.

The media is welcome to attend our fundraising events, which are held in public places. Our guest lists are known. This never happens with the parties across the way. What do they have to hide? We prefer to be open.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I face the difficult task of addressing something rather unpleasant.

In recent years, I had the honour of occupying a role that allowed me to effectively represent Quebec and its regions. I had the honour of being the longest serving minister of Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions. I also had the honour of being the political lieutenant for Quebec for former prime minister Stephen Harper. Both of those roles have been eliminated. Now the Liberals like to claim that their 40 members from that province are standing up for Quebec's regions, but what I am hearing is that we did more with five members than they are doing with 40.

Why did the Liberals take away the Quebec regions' right to be heard through those positions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking the member for his service to his community, to the House, and to all Canadians for many years.

We certainly do not see eye to eye on many issues, but one thing we do agree on is that we must be there at all times to defend our values and our communities. I do so proudly as a Quebecker, just as he has. Everyone in the House will miss him when he goes, because he has made us work harder and more fervently to defend our communities and our country.

* * *

• (1435)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of being the mayor of Roberval, a small town in Quebec with 10,000 residents, for seven years before I came here. Small towns also have a right to be heard. Big infrastructure announcements are being made regarding \$1-billion or \$1.4-billion projects. The government is giving \$100-million projects access to an infrastructure bank.

How does the government intend to give greater consideration to the country's small municipalities, who are coming to talk to us about this? The minister has said that the infrastructure bank will help everyone, but that is not true. How will the government's plan help small communities across Canada? Canada is not just made up of Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto.

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud to have put forward an agenda to build and rebuild all Canadian communities, regardless of size. We have dedicated funding of \$2 billion for small communities, water and waste-water funding that has primarily gone to build waterways for our systems in small communities. As well, 80% of the funding approved for the small communities fund has gone to communities with a population of less than 15,000 people.

That is exactly what we are focused on. We want to help all communities, large, mid-sized, small towns, and hamlets.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is close to passing Canada's all-time per capita spending record, but unlike his predecessors, his out-of-control spending is without a global recession or a large-scale military conflict. The Liberals spend and spend, while nickel-and-diming everyday Canadians and forcing tax hikes on the most vulnerable. The deficit is already three times what the Liberals promised, and they have no plan to get it under control.

Can the minister tell Canadians when the budget will be balanced?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear with this House: we have a plan, and that plan is working. What we have seen over the course of the last year and a half is that our economy is doing significantly better. Over the last three quarters, as an example, we have 3.5% real growth. More than a quarter of a million full-time jobs have been created over the last year. What we are seeing is a real improvement in our economy, which is helping families across this country. That is exactly what we have set out to do: make a real difference for Canadians, today and tomorrow.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer. Former parliamentary budget watchdog Kevin Page said the Liberal spending patterns are like his weekend golf swing: loose and all over the place. Worse, Page said Canada's fiscal analysis is among the weakest in the G7.

The Liberals' only plan is to slap even more taxes on Canadians who already cannot afford it. The Liberals spend billions of dollars overseas, hundreds of thousands of dollars on big, self-centred perks and cardboard cut-outs. Their priorities are out of whack. It is ridiculous.

When will the Liberals finally be responsible, keep their word, and stop risking the economic futures of young Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason the IMF and the OECD look at Canada and say we are making a real difference is that they can see the impact we are actually having on young Canadians: creating jobs for people, more than 250,000 full-time jobs over the course of the last year and a half. That is the best record in many years. That is exactly what we set out to do. We are seeing better economic outcomes today. What that is going to prove is that we are showing real benefits for Canadians today and tomorrow.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance met with his provincial counterparts. What did he talk about? Taxing marijuana. Wow. What a way to help society. That sort of thing is pretty low on Canadians' list of priorities.

I will be a good team player and recognize that my friend, the Minister of Finance, has a particular expertise when it comes to taxes. He invented the Liberal carbon tax and he raised taxes on alcohol, the Friday and Saturday night tax. He has also done many other things, like doing away with certain tax credits.

Is taxing marijuana really a good thing for Canadians?

● (1440)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have very important goals when it comes to cannabis. We want to put criminals out of business and we want a system that protects children. Those are our two goals.

What is more, it is very important to keep taxes very low. That way there will be fewer criminals in the system. That is very important. That is our plan, and the situation will be better in the future.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said, "That is our plan."

Two days ago, Global Television aired a clip of the Prime Minister making a statement that was completely irresponsible. He said he had no idea when Canada would return to a balanced budget. This is the first time in the history of Canada that a Prime Minister has uttered such nonsense.

The Minister of Finance is a serious man who has a great deal of experience in the private sector.

When the Minister of Finance worked in the private sector, would he have tolerated such an insipid remark from the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether in the private or public sector, the figures are the same.

The situation is clear. Our economic growth is much stronger than it was before. Our growth in the last three quarters has been in the order of 3.5%. We are in a very good situation, and employment levels are quite high for young people and Canadians across the country. Our plan for the economy is working very well for our country.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, having voted in favour of the Harper government's Bill C-51, the minister is finally presenting the promised reforms, but they are unfortunately incomplete.

The security of Canada information sharing act can have its name changed, but that is only a cosmetic change that does not protect the information shared by national security agencies.

Why has the minister not addressed one of the most controversial aspects of the former Bill C-51?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the election we laid out a very detailed program for how we would deal with Bill C-51, and today we have implemented exactly that. It is contained in Bill C-59, before the House, which is in addition to the committee of parliamentarians, which is in addition to the funding for counter-radicalization, which is in addition to the most extensive consultations in Canadian history. We have listened carefully to Canadians and we have implemented their advice.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the committee of parliamentarians does not have full access; the consultation took nearly two years, while CSIS continued to use these new abusive powers that it has. The promise was to fix a bill as a way to hide from the fact that they endorsed the Conservatives' draconian agenda. The Federal Court ruled a few months ago that it was illegal for CSIS to retain bulk metadata. What we see in Bill C-59 is simply formalizing and legalizing what the court deemed illegal.

Could the minister explain where in the consultations he was told by experts and Canadians that it was the right thing to do?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his judgment last fall, Justice Noël of the Federal Court indicated that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, in his view, was out of date in relation to new technology and other developments over the last 25 years. We have taken his judgment to heart and in fact implemented in this legislation the kind of framework to ensure that the law and the Constitution are properly respected.

The difficulty is that Canadians have made it very clear that they do not trust the NDP with their safety and they do not trust the Conservatives with their rights.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-created partisan appointments know no bounds. Dwight Duncan, former Liberal finance minister and Liberal appointment as chair of the Windsor–Detroit Bridge Authority, is using his position to take partisan swipes at leaders on both sides of the border. One wonders when he has time to oversee the construction of the Gordie Howe bridge. The Prime Minister's personal directive to public office holders is clear. They must refrain from expressing partisan views. Why do the Liberals not appoint someone who can stickhandle this project without annoying everyone on both sides of the border?

● (1445)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the chair of the WDBA was appointed a year ago through an open, transparent, and merit-based selection process, and he brings a considerable amount of experience to this important position as a result of his diverse career accomplishments both in the private sector and in the public sector. His in-depth knowledge about the Windsor–Detroit region and his lifelong residency in the region is an asset. He has apologized for his comments, and I accept his apology.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Dwight Duncan is in an apologizing mood, maybe he could apologize for working with Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, turning Ontario into a have-not province while he was finance minister. With construction of the \$4.8 billion bridge set to start next summer, Duncan has been preoccupied on social media gushing over Liberals and attacking anyone who is not. He admitted his inappropriate and reckless tweets and comments were an obvious lack of judgment. Will the Prime Minister show some good judgment for once and fire this partisan political hack?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Gordie Howe international bridge is a very critical trade corridor between Canada and the United States, and 30% of the surface trade between Canada and the U.S. goes through this corridor. We are focused on getting this crossing built, and that is exactly why we appointed Mr. Duncan to undertake the duties of the board and also make sure that we are on time and on budget.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the false pretenses of openness and transparency, the Liberal government is busy being Liberal. It is secretive and partisan. Madeleine Meilleur's anticipated resignation, even before it was confirmed, sparked off long debates and seriously undermined the credibility of all future holders of senior positions. It is ridiculous. Because of the Liberals, the public's understanding is that, in order to be appointed, you must have contributed to the coffers or be a member of the select club of Liberal cronies.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to removing the Liberal Party of Canada membership card from the selection criteria?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have implemented a new, open, transparent, and merit-based appointment process. Our aim is to identify highly qualified candidates who will help achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity. All Canadians can continue to apply for positions, which are advertised online.

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to appointments it is clear that, if people are not Liberal, they need not apply. Whether it is trying to reward a retired Ontario Liberal cabinet minister or any long-time Liberal donors, the present Prime Minister has shown he has only one priority, which is to take care of his friends at the cost of the taxpayer.

The appointments process is now so botched that the Liberals cannot even find impartial candidates to be the next ethics or lobbying commissioner. The Prime Minister has lost all credibility on this file. When will he get serious and let people who know what they are doing fix his appointments mess?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in this place, we have put in place a new process, an open, transparent, merit-based process, where Canadians can apply for available positions, which are all posted online. I encourage all members to look into their communities to encourage Canadians who are wanting to serve this country in many different capacities. We know the important work these positions do for our country. We are looking for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We are looking at gender parity. We are looking at bilingualism. This is an amazing opportunity, and all members can be part of this to get Canadians to apply.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES, AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in its history, Inland Refugee Society of BC was forced to turn away a family of asylum seekers because the Liberal government refused to provide it with any support. The Liberals refused to suspend the safe third country agreement, preventing asylum seekers from crossing at official points of entry. Last week, we learned that asylum wait times could hit 11 years long.

How can the Prime Minister claim today, on World Refugee Day, that he welcomes refugees, when he refuses to do anything to actually help refugees?

[Translation]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this World Refugee Day, I am proud of our government's commitment to welcoming people fleeing war, terror, and persecution.

● (1450)

[English]

As the government, we have played a leadership role that has been acknowledged all over the world. We are putting resources behind our principles. This year alone, we are investing more than \$700 million in the resettlement of refugees and integration. We are providing \$62.9 million in budget 2017 for legal aid for refugees.

We will always defend refugees and provide them with enough supports to rebuild their lives and become great Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says all the right things about welcoming refugees to Canada.

The problem is what he does. He refused to suspend the Canada-U.S. safe third country agreement. The Immigration and Refugee Board is underfunded and riddled with vacancies. Nothing has been done to deal with the 24,000-case backlog. That is just the beginning.

On this World Refugee Day, will the Prime Minister pledge to walk the talk?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and the international

community recognize this government's record and leadership on welcoming refugees, and I am proud of our record and our leadership.

[English]

We are investing more than \$700 million this year on refugee resettlement and integration services; \$62.9 million in budget 2017 for legal aid for refugees to better make their case in front the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. The Immigration and Refugee Board has put measures in place to increase productivity. We have ordered a third-party review to find more efficiencies in the Immigration and Refugee Board. We will continue to play—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in small and large indigenous communities across this country, language is foundational. Dozens of indigenous languages are at threat of extinction. In fact, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report had several calls to action about preserving and protecting aboriginal languages.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage please update this House on what our government is doing to safeguard indigenous languages?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Yukon for his important work on this file.

[Translation]

Our responsibility to protect and promote indigenous languages is a priority for our government.

[English]

Last week, alongside the leaders of the national indigenous organizations, we made a declaration of intent to collaborate on the co-development of a first legislation to support and protect these important indigenous languages. By helping to preserve and restore indigenous languages, our government is following through on its commitment to building a new nation-to-nation relationship in the spirit of reconciliation.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Norsat sell-off, the Liberals are betraying Canadian interests. Contrary to what the Prime Minister says, this is a threat to our national security and that of our closest allies. Red flags have been raised in Washington, but not in the Prime Minister's Office here in Canada.

When will the Prime Minister put the security of Canadians before the interests of his friends in Beijing?

Oral Questions

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the security of Canadians is our absolute priority. All transactions under the Investment Canada Act are subject to a multistep national security review process. We can confirm that this process was followed with respect to Hytera's proposed acquisition of Norsat, and there are no outstanding national security concerns under the act.

Throughout the process, security agencies had access to all pertinent facts, information, and intelligence. They made that recommendation on this basis.

We never have and we never will compromise national security.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the case of Norsat, a company that manufactures safety equipment to ensure our security and that of the Americans, the Liberals neglected that security. The Chinese did not want a full review, and the Prime Minister responded that there was no problem, we would not do one. This is not a poker game; we are talking about the security of Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister finally launch a full risk review for our national security?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take national security very seriously. All the investments examined under the act are subject to a multi-step security review process, which was done in this case. The national security community conducted a review and confirmed that the security procedures and the safeguards in place comply with our high standards. No transaction would take place if it did not meet our strong guarantees and security measures.

• (1455)

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to appease China, the Liberals approved the sale of B.C.'s largest chain of retirement homes to Anbang Insurance. So questionable are the past dealings and practices of this Chinese company that one financial regulator complained that they were “barbarians” in the insurance sector. Now we learn that the founder of Anbang, Mr. Wu, is being detained on suspicion of money laundering and other alleged crimes.

Why, when the wolves of Wall Street will not deal with this questionable company, did the Prime Minister rush headlong into approving this deal? Why did he sell out our seniors?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the application by Cedar Tree to acquire Retirement Concepts was approved, as the acquisition will result in a net benefit to Canada. Cedar Tree has agreed to maintain at least the current levels of full-time and part-time employees; have the current Canadian operator, Retirement Concepts, continue to manage the business; not close or repurpose any of the existing residences; and financially support the expansion of the business. These guarantees will remain in place for a significant period of time.

There was a net benefit to Canada here. That is the criterion under the act. That is why we approved it.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no net benefit to B.C.'s seniors from this deal. It is like an onion: the more layers we peel back, the more it smells.

It has become all too clear that there is no deal with the Chinese that this Liberal government will not make. It is wearing out its rubber stamp. Whether it is giving up our military technology or putting a corrupt company in charge of caring for our seniors, anything and everything is up for grabs.

When will the Prime Minister stop selling out Canadians to appease his Liberal friends and backers in Beijing?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that this deal was good for Canada. Canadians can be reassured that we followed the Investment Canada Act process and carried out its required due diligence. We examined the case on its own merits and approved the acquisition because it is of net economic benefit to Canada.

Jobs will be maintained. None of the existing residences will be closed or repurposed, and financial resources will be available for expansion. This means more seniors living in high-quality health care facilities in Canada and more jobs in Canada. There is a net benefit to Canada here.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the government's announcement, a lot of work remains to be done to save all the forestry jobs once and for all. Just yesterday, Unifor organized a day of action across the country, including in my home of Jonquière. I marched side by side with the workers to acknowledge the importance of the forestry sector, which is central to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean communities.

The former government left a lot of money on the table in the last agreement. Can the minister assure us that her government will not negotiate a sellout agreement?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to defending Quebec's forestry sector and we continue to include it in all our negotiations. We strongly oppose the U.S. Department of Commerce's decision to impose unfair countervailing duties. We will continue to work closely with our industry and provincial partners. A negotiated agreement would be the best outcome for Canadians and for the Americans. Nevertheless, we want a good agreement for Canada, not just any agreement.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers are out in the streets fighting for their jobs because the Liberal government is failing to fix it.

The failure of the Liberals to secure a deal on softwood is seriously threatening forestry jobs. On the eve of NAFTA renegotiations, the lack of a softwood deal is not inspiring much confidence. The Liberals like to talk about their respectful relationship with the U.S. and how they will get the best deal. How can Canadians trust the government to get a good deal on NAFTA when the Liberals continue to fail to get an agreement on softwood lumber?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the previous Conservative government allowed the agreement to lapse.

We strongly disagree with the U.S. commerce department's decision to impose unfair and punitive duties—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

• (1500)

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, we will challenge this U.S. decision in the courts and we will win, as we have done on every past occasion.

The Prime Minister raises softwood lumber with President Trump at every opportunity, just as the minister for global affairs and trade does. However, we want a good agreement for Canada, not just any deal.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in media reports today, the RCMP have alleged that an employee in Public Services and Procurement Canada was responsible for the leaks about Canada's shipbuilding program. However, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence have both stated that they support the action directed by the PMO against a senior member of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Now there are new allegations about another government department and another individual. Does it not just prove that the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence are simply incompetent on this file?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to open, fair, and transparent procurement processes. Through the national shipbuilding strategy, we are committed to getting the women and men of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard the equipment they need to do their jobs in protecting and serving Canadians.

The strategy is a long-term commitment to shipbuilding that will rejuvenate our industry, support Canadian innovation, and bring jobs and prosperity to communities across the country.

*[Translation]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our men and women in uniform have front row seats for the sad spectacle of the Liberals and the Prime Minister.

For the past year, the opposition, experts, and the military have been telling the government to stop misleading Canadians with the unnecessary purchase of 18 Super Hornets. The minister has lost all credibility. Canadians also realize that the Prime Minister is improvising at the expense of national security.

Can the government stop improvising and finally hold an open and transparent process to replace the fighter jets in order to give the military the equipment they are entitled to right now?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very proud, on behalf of the government's new defence policy, to be able to announce that we will be purchasing not 65 fighter aircraft but 88, making sure that we have a full, transparent competition to replace the entire fleet.

We are investing in our legacy fleet as well. We do have a capability gap and we need to fill it to make sure that the air force has all the planes necessary to meet all their commitments simultaneously.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's rush to process Syrian refugees has resulted in a backlog of almost 45,000 privately sponsored refugees.

This means that many of the world's most persecuted—including Iraqi Christians, Yazidis, and LGBTQ+, many of whom are internally displaced and cannot survive the process of getting onto a UNHRC list—remain in peril, even though Canadians have fundraised to bring them to Canada.

Why is the Prime Minister turning his back on both generous Canadian donors and persecuted minorities?

[Translation]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our government's results and leadership in welcoming refugees, which was recognized in Canada and around the world.

[English]

This year we will have allocations of 40,000 people for protected persons and refugees. That includes 25,000 resettled refugees from abroad, which is double what that party and that member committed to, and 16,000 privately sponsored refugees, which is almost quadruple what that party and that member committed to.

We will take no lessons on refugee resettlement from that member and that party.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL PARKS**

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to see that the amendments to the Rouge National Urban Park Act received royal assent yesterday. Now the Rouge park has the same level of environmental protection as every other national park. This was a Liberal platform commitment, it was a mandate priority of the Prime Minister, and, most importantly, it was a fulfillment of the dreams of citizens of Scarborough and the GTA.

Would the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please inform the House of the next steps in the completion of this national park?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and the many citizens who have worked for decades to make Rouge National Urban Park a reality.

With royal assent to Bill C-18, we kept our promise to protect the Rouge, provide certainty for farmers, work with first nations, and build a lasting legacy for Canada.

On Sunday, Ontario's premier and my caucus colleagues and I canoed at the CPAWS Annual Paddle the Rouge, where the premier reiterated the commitment of the Ontario government to transfer provincial land to complete the Rouge.

The Rouge is within one hour's drive of seven million Canadians and is accessible by public transit. I am so proud that the Rouge will become the world's largest—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

* * *

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we should mark that down on the calendar. It seems as though the Liberals kept a campaign promise.

A new report has found that Marine Atlantic, a crown corporation operating ferries between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, is receiving taxpayer subsidies and forcing out private marine shipping from the market. Marine Atlantic's role is to provide fair and reasonable services, not to put close to 1,000 jobs across eastern Canada at risk through its heavily subsidized and heavily discounted rates.

What is the minister doing to ensure a level playing field for all of our shippers in Atlantic Canada?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is dedicated to ensuring Canadians have an integrated and sustainable transportation system. The ferry service connecting Newfoundland to the mainland serves as a critical economic and social link and a visible element of Canada's constitutional mandate to connect the province to the rest of the country.

We are committed to Newfoundlanders having safe, efficient, and reliable ferry services to the mainland.

[Translation]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's inconsistency will never cease to amaze us. In Canada, the only plug-in hybrid minivan available is the Chrysler Pacifica, manufactured here by our unionized workers in Windsor. This is a fine opportunity for the National Capital Commission to purchase one and to show it off to all the tourists who come to Ottawa to celebrate Canada 150 right here, in front of the Parliament buildings. Well, no, that will not happen. The National Capital Commission's two new minivans run on gas only. What a missed opportunity.

Can someone tell me why we want to hide our finest technological achievements? These are not made in China.

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, it is Canada's 150th anniversary and tomorrow we are kicking off the celebrations.

It will be June 21, National Aboriginal Day. Then we will have the day celebrating Quebec and the Canadian Francophonie, Canadian Multiculturalism Day, and finally Canada Day.

I encourage all members in the House and all Canadians to celebrate Canada Day and to show off the best technologies that are proudly Canadian and that of course help in our fight against climate change.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are over 65 million refugees fleeing persecution around the world. Countries like Canada have a responsibility to ensure that we do our part to support and provide refuge to those in need of protection.

On this World Refugee Day, can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please advise this House on the government's commitment to refugee resettlement?

[Translation]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member from Scarborough—Rouge Park for his work as an advocate for refugees.

On World Refugee Day, I am proud of our government's commitment to welcome those fleeing war, terror, and persecution.

Oral Questions

[English]

As a government, we responded to the largest refugee crisis in half a century by admitting 40,000 Syrian refugees. We restored refugee health care that was callously cut by the previous government. We tripled the number of privately sponsored refugees.

As a former refugee, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I applaud the generosity of Canadians who day in and day out assist refugees.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, listen to this capability gap.

In October, the Liberals invited veterans from the Somalian and Afghanistan wars to give heart-wrenching testimony about side effects and the impact they experienced from being forced to take mefloquine. When the committee tabled the report to the House, veterans were shocked to see that the vast majority of witness testimony was stripped out. On this side of the House, we stand with veterans, and that is why we tabled the witness testimony so that Canadians could hear the truth.

Will the minister commit to not only responding to the committee but also to the countless hours of heartbreaking witness testimony?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and wellness of veterans and their families is at the core of what we do. I am proud of the fact that committee members looked at all of these issues, because they, too, are committed to the health and wellness of veterans.

I can tell the member that I have not yet had an opportunity to review the whole report. I will be doing so and looking into how we can fold in some of the ideas to best support veterans and their families that lead to better outcomes for their success.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, practically everyone in Quebec has condemned the energy east project. Today, the Federation of Quebec Municipalities is joining in. This project threatens our rivers, lakes, and farmland. Under this project, Quebec assumes all the risks without any of the benefits.

Do you know who is not standing up to defend Quebec on this project? Obviously, as usual, it is those who do not stand up for our people, the 40 phantom MPs of the Liberal Party.

When will these 40 phantom MPs stand up to defend Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the member will have every opportunity to express that view and the view of his colleagues to the National Energy Board, which will be spending the next 21 or so months

reviewing every aspect of that pipeline proposal. Surely, he would not want us to make a decision before he has had a chance to tell the National Energy Board what he thinks.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the same goes for the infrastructure bank. No one in Quebec supports this government, not the experts, not the National Assembly, not the farmers. They all agree with us that it makes no sense to let financiers from Toronto build whatever they want in Quebec with no regard for our laws on the environment, urban planning, and agriculture.

Who are the 40 phantom MPs from Quebec working for? Is there one among them who can represent his or her constituents rather than Bay Street?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our infrastructure investments are achieving real and tangible results for Canadians. They are helping us buy new buses to grow public transit systems. They are making systems accessible for people with disabilities. They are helping to renovate more affordable housing for people to have a decent place to live.

As far as respect for the jurisdiction is concerned, the infrastructure bank, or any project undertaken by the bank, will respect the local laws and regulations in place.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, chapter 13 of O'Brien and Bosc, under "Rules of Order and Decorum", on page 614, indicates that a member cannot do indirectly what cannot be done directly. It is obviously referring to quoting from newspaper articles, etc. I would argue that it should also hold to members saying, "Any member who", and making a statement about the member.

Last Wednesday, following question period, in response to a point of order raised by the member for Mégantic—L'Érable regarding an inappropriate personal comment made about him by the Prime Minister in response to his question that day, you had indicated that you would check the *Hansard* and get back to the House if you deemed it necessary.

I will point out that this is not the first time—in fact, it is the third time at least,—that the Prime Minister has had a point of order raised regarding his behaviour in question period. On two previous occasions, it was in relation to his taunting of female members of Parliament who were asking questions. You indicated that you would check and get back to the House. In those cases, it is possible that his behaviour was not recorded on camera. However, in this case, it would be something that you could check, because it was made while he was responding to a question.

Government Orders

Given that past record of deplorable behaviour, the fact that this has been raised, and you indicated you would get back to the House and also given that it is not permissible to do indirectly what is not permissible directly, I would ask if you have had the chance to do the review and advise the House of your ruling. If you decided that it was not necessary to report back to the House, I would ask that you give us your justification for that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie for the supplemental information. I will look into it and will come back to the House if necessary.

● (1515)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to return to presenting reports from committees. The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration's 12th report is now ready, with dissenting reports appended. The opportunity to ensure it is presented in the House before the summer adjournment would be appreciated by all members of the committee.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled, "LGBTQ+ at Risk Abroad: Canada's Call to Action".

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

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives fully support many aspects of this report, including the recommendation for regular funding of the rainbow assistance program, which was started under the former Conservative government. There are other requests of the government, as noted in the dissenting report.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

YUKON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 30, 2017, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-17.

Call in the members.

● (1525)

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

(*Division No. 339*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Chan	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Kwan	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Maloney	Masse (Windsor West)

Government Orders

Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Moore
Morneau	Morrissey
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Pauzé	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Thériault	Tootoo
Trudeau	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid— 212

Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Viens
Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer— 83

Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[Translation]

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment relating to Government Business No. 18.

The question is on the amendment.

● (1530)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 340)

YEAS

Members

Aboultouf	Albrecht
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Aubin
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bemier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Albrecht
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Benzen	Bergen
Bemier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Eglinski	Falk
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Lake
Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Paul-Hus
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs

Government Orders

Mathysen
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Motz
 Nantel
 Nicholson
 O'Toole
 Pauzé
 Quach
 Rankin
 Reid
 Richards
 Sansoucy
 Scheer
 Shields
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Stetski
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Trudel
 Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warawa
 Waugh
 Weir
 Yurdiga

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McColeman
 Moore
 Mulcair
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Paul-Hus
 Plamondon
 Ramsey
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Saganash
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Shipley
 Sorenson
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Stubbs
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Warrentin
 Webber
 Wong
 Zimmer— 130

McCrimmon
 McGuinity
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
 Monsef
 Momeau
 Murray
 Ng
 Oliphant
 Ouellette
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Qualtrough
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Tan
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid— 167

McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sorbara
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Trudeau
 Vandenbeld
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

NAYS

Members

Aldag
 Alleslev
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Beech
 Bibeau
 Blair
 Bossio
 Breton
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chen
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Jordan
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lighthart
 Long
 Ludwig
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)

Alghabra
 Anandasangaree
 Arya
 Badawey
 Baylis
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Boissonnault
 Bratina
 Brison
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Chan
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Gerretsen
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Khalid
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Lebouthillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 Maloney

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

● (1535)

[English]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Government Business No. 18.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1540)

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

*Government Orders**(Division No. 341)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chan
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easton
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauson (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petipas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sohi

Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 168

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albrecht
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Aubin
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore	Motz
Mulcair	Nantel
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Paupé
Plamondon	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Vierson	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 128

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***RESIGNATION OF MEMBER**

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have always respected both official languages of our country, but I will give my speech in French as it will be easier for translation. However, I want to tell everybody in English that I was proud to speak both official languages in the House.

[Translation]

Life is always good when you give yourself time and time can do its work. Given the schedule that was originally planned, according to which we were to adjourn a few days ago, I never thought I would have the opportunity to speak to the House as I am doing today. I want to thank everyone and all parliamentarians for what has happened in the last few hours. I also want them to have as many great moments as I have had here in the wonderful House of Commons.

I came here in 2007, after having been mayor. My first political life began in 2000. I have now been in politics full time for 17 years. I arrived here in September 2007 after winning the first by-election for the Stephen Harper government. At the time, I had an office on the sixth floor of the Confederation Building. I had just arrived here when my neighbour to the left knocked on my door. I did not have staff, I did not have a team and I was alone. The House had been prorogued, and nobody was in Ottawa. This person invited me to knock on his door if I needed anything, and he would be there. That person is you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you again.

Of course, I am sure everyone has heard by now that I am leaving politics in the next few weeks. I will use the coming weeks to honourably finish the work that remains, as I hope I have done for the past 17 years. I need to close my four offices, transfer files to the proponents that submitted them to me, do the summer festival circuit in my riding, meet with people, thank them, and help prepare the next by-election to make sure the Conservatives win, of course. That is how I will be spending the next few weeks. Today is simply an opportunity for me to say thank you.

I want to thank everyone in this beautiful place, the House of Commons, and the rest of Parliament Hill. We all need to make a point of thanking the people who help us do our jobs without too many headaches, from the person who washes the floor to the one who serves us our meals, from our security officers to the person who cuts the grass. The pages are there for us for every little thing we need, as we saw earlier. We can all be satisfied and proud of those individuals.

I first came here in 2007, and one year later, I became a minister because someone put his trust in me. A great man, a great prime minister, Stephen Harper, someone I will never forget as long as I live, did me the honour of entrusting me with considerable responsibilities.

Recently, the Minister of Transport was talking about how much work he had, and I joked that when I was the transport minister, I was also the minister of infrastructure, communities, and inter-governmental affairs, as well as the minister responsible for the

Economic Development Agency of Canada for Quebec Regions, so he had no business telling me he had lots of work because he was practically on vacation.

I owe all that to Stephen Harper, a great prime minister, who had faith in me and led us to a balanced budget. He gave me mandates. When I got to Transport Canada, the new Champlain Bridge was not even on the radar. There was nothing going on with it. Just 140 days later, thanks to former finance minister Jim Flaherty and Prime Minister Harper, we made an announcement about that major project for the Montreal area. We also announced the Windsor bridge project. In fact, it was my honour to announce the Windsor bridge. Given what I am seeing now, maybe I should have appointed the board of directors too. I would have made different appointments, but that is another story.

I had the honour of developing this country's biggest infrastructure plan ever with a balanced budget. That is an important distinction. I could go on and on, but I will stop here. Mr. Harper put his trust in me, and I will be forever grateful.

After the election, another great woman gave me the opportunity to become deputy leader of the official opposition. The member for Sturgeon River—Parkland asked me to be her right-hand man, and I am still grateful for that honour.

● (1545)

I have a lot of confidence in the young member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

One of the reasons why I can leave today with peace of mind is all of the people behind me. We have a new leader, who will demonstrate how empathetic he is and how in touch he is with people's feelings, while having a great economic vision and a lot of respect for Canadians.

Of course, I want to thank all the members of the Quebec caucus, past and present, who have always supported me. Today, they allowed me to leave. There were five of us, then 12. Now there are 11, but I am sure there will be more.

Canada's public servants are among the best in the world. When I was a minister, I had the opportunity to work with many great public servants from all departments. I have a soft spot for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for Quebec Regions. A Quebecker who comes from one of the regions loves being in the regions of Quebec. Every public servant I had the opportunity to work with showed me how qualified they are. I thank them from the very bottom of my heart.

Tribute

I have had different families. There was the Conservative political family, made up of all the Conservative members that I had the opportunity to work with here in the House, caring and committed men and women. There was also the House of Commons family, made up of all members of the House. All members, regardless of their party, are here to work for the good of Canadians, and we need to continue to be accessible to them and to be respectful and open-minded. Behind all the political posturing are men and women with families and children. When someone attacks the person they love the most in this world, often their father or mother, it affects the whole family. Let us think about that when we engage in parliamentary sparring. Let us show respect for all members of the House.

I also found family in the various departments I have headed, with up to 42 employees. A few of them are here today. They became my second family. Some of them became my sons and daughters, and I thank them for that. Those were often very turbulent years, when we had to handle several files at once. There is never anyone more important than the team. In life, when we realize how lucky we are to be at the top of a pyramid or a group of individuals while respecting those below, that always makes things much easier. I have long and often said that I would be Denis much longer than a minister. It was just a job. Later, people will remember Denis, not my job.

I have often said that it was very nice to be important, but it was much more important to be nice. When someone is not nice, people remember. I will continue living my life that way and working to make things happen.

I thank everyone who has worked for me. I want to pay special tribute to my former chief of staff, Mr. Yan Plante. He has done an exceptional job, and he provides me with valued advice even today.

● (1550)

I also thank all of the constituents in my riding, where I was the mayor. I thank them for putting their trust in me.

Obviously, I would like to close by thanking my family. When public life is forced on our spouses, children, and grandchildren for 17 years, it is not always easy.

I would like to share a story. My granddaughter was in grade 4 at the time. She was told by her teacher, a political opponent, that her granddad was going to lose the election. It is hard to imagine a child of nine or 10 being told that by someone, but these things happen. When we decide to get into politics, our families get dragged into it as well. We must remember to always protect our families and to help them protect themselves.

My life philosophy has always been the same. I have always said that we are all human, and no matter the colour of our skin or our political, religious, or sexual orientation, we should work together to build a better future and a better world for those around us. I am proud to call the Lac-Saint-Jean region my home, and I always will be.

I hope that I will be remembered as someone who gave of himself, as does everyone else here.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

● (1555)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

* * *

HON. MEMBER FOR LAC-SAINT-JEAN

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to pay tribute to our deputy leader and good friend, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

For over a decade, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, a proud native son, served his constituents with distinction. He devoted his life to serving the public, specifically his constituents in Roberval.

At a time when our Conservative movement needed energy and reassurance, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean was there to lead the way.

[*English*]

Through him, voters knew that our Conservative caucus was fighting every single day to help their businesses succeed, help their families stay prosperous, and help their communities grow.

[*Translation*]

As a result of his hard work and leadership, our Conservative family in Quebec grew from five to 12 members in the last election. The Conservative caucus is always stronger when it is represented in la belle province. We have the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean to thank for making us stronger.

[*English*]

He was always a natural choice to lead, not just our efforts in Quebec but within our caucus as well. We have trusted him to be a source of wise counsel and to always bring to the table a strong perspective on what everyday Canadians are thinking.

[*Translation*]

The fact that he was Minister of Transport and Minister of Infrastructure is a testament to his unique capacity to know what Canadians and their families expect from a responsible government. Under his leadership, the Champlain Bridge in Montreal received considerable support. This is a project that will allow traffic to flow more smoothly. When he was infrastructure minister, he oversaw the construction of highway 85 in Quebec, under the new Building Canada fund.

In his riding, his work for the Véloroute des Bleuets, the historic village of Val-Jalbert, and the Zoo sauvage de Saint-Félicien helped his region to flourish even more.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean has always been driven to help families and job creators in Quebec to prosper in their province. That was always very important to him. Among all his responsibilities, I know that what he enjoyed most was meeting Quebecers right across the province in his capacity as minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.

*Tribute**[English]*

Within our ranks, his warmth and friendship have been critical in helping our party navigate the experience of leading a minority government, then a majority, and then being an effective official opposition, soon to become the government again. When that day comes, it will be in no small part because of the hard work the member for Lac-Saint-Jean put in, day after day. As he has said himself, he is not a man who does things in half measures. We on this side of the House know how true that is.

[Translation]

On behalf of our entire caucus, I hope that he will enjoy his next mission, that of taking time for himself and his family, to the fullest. I thank Danielle and his children, Marie-Ève and Mathieu, for sharing him with us for these many years.

I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for his work, his wisdom, and his friendship. I will always remember our trip to Rome a few years ago. Despite the years he spent as an organizer of the Traversée internationale du lac Saint-Jean, I know that although he is not a great swimmer he will be happy spending more time on the beach, on the shores of his lake.

The Speaker: I apologize to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I should have introduced him as the Leader of the Opposition even though he is the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

The hon. Chief Government Whip.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the walls of Parliament shook this week when the member for Roberval announced that he is leaving. It was such a surprise to all of the members that we decided to suspend the House immediately this week.

This is big news. The member for Roberval is a politician, a well-known and highly respected public figure, and he is also greatly liked by Quebecers. In fact, he is such a nice guy that I always suspected that he was a Liberal. We on both sides of the House will miss him very much.

I could easily talk about his career as a businessman, as the mayor of Roberval, as a member of Parliament, as a minister of half of the government, and as president of the Privy Council. I will stop here, because that is not what matters. Everything he has done is great, but what matters is the man behind it all. Behind the politician, the member of Parliament, and the minister, there is the man. Beyond the political adversary there is the man, the human being, a generous, passionate, fair and always smiling individual. He is Mr. Smile, in a way.

He is a father, grandfather, husband, friend, hockey player, golfer, badminton player, and champion cyclist. He is successful at everything he does; he is an accomplished athlete.

• (1600)

[English]

In other words, he is not just another pretty face. He is also a helluva good guy, and we will miss him.

[Translation]

He gave me a hard time. When I had the privilege of being the co-chair of the campaign in Quebec, I toured the regions and tried to get candidates. Every time I arrived somewhere, I was told that the hon. member for Roberval had just passed through. He's a damn good guy, and he was ahead of us every time. Whether it was by car or by bicycle, he was absolutely everywhere. He is a machine.

As I said earlier, what he did not do by car, he did by bicycle with the same smile and the same energy. He is a bit like the Energizer bunny; he keeps going and going. I saw him at work on the ground, and he won all my admiration and all my respect. It can be said that he served his constituents and his country with honour, dignity, and humility.

Today, he is heading home, to his region and to his family. He is so attached to that region, to his roots, that it was there that he announced his departure this week. I just hope he will not change his mind.

In preparing these notes, I reread an interview that I really liked and that touched me. The reporter asked him, "What have fatherhood and family changed in your life, your perspective on everyday life?"

He answered, "I have always considered family as being the essence, the reason why we do things, the foundation of everything. When you are in high places professionally, family becomes even more important. My family is my safe haven, where I am told the truth and I am supported as a person."

The other question that he was asked was: "If you were to go back 30 years, would you have done some things differently with your children?"

He answered, "Although my children never complained about my absence, I would try to be more present."

Today, he will go back home, he will be with his family and he will be much more present. On behalf of the Liberal members, I would like to thank and congratulate him for all his accomplishments.

On a more personal note, the next time I am in Roberval, if he is not away cycling up Mount Everest, we will sit down and solve the problems of the world over a glass of wine.

I wish him all the best.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the New Democratic Party whip, Mr. Speaker, it is my honour, Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute today, Mr. Speaker, to the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, Mr. Speaker, whom I will call by name if you do not mind, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Denis Lebel, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure you noticed how many times I mentioned your title in my introduction, and I hope you realize I was just having a little fun at the member for Lac-Saint-Jean's expense by imitating his speaking style. Please believe me when I say that I kid because I care. Despite our political differences, I am very fond of the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. I thought I knew him, but it turns out I did not know him as well as I thought.

Tribute

I recently found out that the member for Lac-Saint-Jean is an accomplished cyclist who rides at least 3,000 kilometres every summer. That is really impressive. I also learned that he was a badminton champion at the age of 18. That would explain his aggressive style on behalf of the former Conservative government.

I was less surprised to discover that he was once the director of the Village historique de Val-Jalbert. I can definitely picture him sporting a bowler hat and suspenders at the general store in that company town, busy pulling a fast one on a bunch of his fellow villagers.

Although he is self-taught, he has verve, our Denis. Not only has he been a very eloquent speaker in the House of Commons for 10 years, but he has remained close to the people, despite all the years and the increased importance of his duties.

When I was infrastructure critic for the official opposition and he was the minister of infrastructure, of course, I had to question him regularly. He answered with such assurance and conviction that he almost believed it. No, I am exaggerating. However, his talents as a communicator always impressed me, even when he used them against me.

A few years later, when he returned after dealing with some health problems, I realized just how nice and kind he was when I asked him about his health, and he told me that he appreciated my concern very much.

As everyone knows, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean was mayor of Roberval before entering federal politics for the Conservative Party. Well-placed sources in Lac-Saint-Jean tell me that he could have run for any party because people voted for the popular man involved in his community rather than for the party he represented.

Now that he is leaving to set sail for other horizons, my colleagues from the New Democratic Party and I would like to thank him for the considerable amount of work he has done over the years.

Two days after Father's Day, I hope that before setting sail on a new adventure, he will take a little time to be a dad and granddad again, because I know he misses it very much.

I would like to conclude this statement with two quotations. The first is from the leader of the NDP, the hon. member for Outremont, who used the words "kind and high road all the way" in speaking to me about Denis Lebel, when I told him that I was the one who would pay tribute to Denis today. He added that Denis made things very difficult for his adversaries because he is such a good guy.

My second quotation comes from the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean himself. In the fall of 2015, when replying to a reporter, after Mr. Lebel moved to the opposition side for the first time in his career in federal politics, he said: "I always treated our political opponents with a lot of respect and dignity when I was a minister. They are certainly repaying me for that today."

I hope to have done so too. Thank you, Denis.

• (1605)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ) : Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I

too would like to pay tribute to the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, who has announced that he is leaving political life. Of course, I could say that one fewer Conservative is always good news. However, I feel that we have to give credit where credit is due.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean has always had a deep attachment to his hometown of Roberval, where he was a respected mayor, as well as to his region and all of Quebec. Mr. Lebel could be seen travelling all over Quebec. He was always well received and always positive, and people fully reciprocated. It is difficult to answer positivity with negativity; this makes for an opponent who is hard to attack.

Politically, he is blue. It is not the same blue as ours, however, even though his constituency was once the constituency of our founding leader. We know he has blue roots, and he proudly represents the blueberry region. He is therefore a true "blueberry" at heart.

He may come across as a teddy bear, but this does not mean that he is as gentle as one. Mr. Lebel has been a formidable opponent. He may not have often raised his voice in the House, but when he debated with his calm, even voice and his smile, he would still find flaws that really stung his opponents. He used them to throw anything he could find back in our faces, making it difficult for his opponents to answer back. He is a tough and effective politician.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I wish him all the best in his future plans, as well as a wonderful return to his family. I am certain that he will be only too happy to return to his lake and its people. I think that Mr. Lebel has been a worthy representative of Lac-Saint-Jean. He could have been very effective in the Bloc, I am sure of that, but well, nobody is perfect.

All the best, hon. member!

• (1610)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will add a few words in complete agreement with everything else my colleagues have said.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean has always been friendly and honourable and a man of integrity. I remember when he was the minister of infrastructure. I believe that he did good work in that area because he had already been a mayor. He was the mayor of Roberval, and he always kept this level of government in mind.

I am absolutely certain that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities found in him a friend and a champion of municipalities and local interests.

I live in a town with a population of 10,000, but at the other side of the country, in the town of Sidney, which is really perfect if someone wants to come for a visit this summer.

I would like to say to my friend, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, on behalf of the entire Green Party of Canada, that we wish him real happiness for the future with his family and loved ones, because happiness is what he deserves.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: I would like to add my voice to all the comments and compliments made to my friend, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

I remember very clearly when he first set foot in the Confederation Building. I note that he mentioned his efforts to be always pleasant. I can attest that he has done so with flying colours.

During the year when we were both in the Confederation Building, not only before but also after he became a minister, he was always truly pleasant. Everyone in the House knows that he is a dedicated man who went above and beyond to serve his country. It must be said that people here not only dedicate their time, but also a large part of their lives. That is what the member for Lac-Saint-Jean did. I very much appreciated it.

I consider him a friend. I appreciate his service not only as a member of Parliament, but also as a minister in Canada. That is much appreciated, on behalf of the House and on behalf of Canadians.

Denis, I hope that you will contact me if you find yourself in Nova Scotia. I could show you some wonderful trails and we could cycle together.

Long life to you, my friend!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

●(1615)

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of order regarding Bill S-229, an act respecting underground infrastructure safety.

I would like to thank Senator Mitchell for sponsoring this bill from the other place. This bill is a worthwhile act that promotes the safety of Canadians as well as important underground infrastructure. It is my hope that the Chair will seriously consider the merits of the following points of procedure as they pertain to Bill S-229.

Specifically, my point of order is in regard to the Chair's ruling of May 9, 2017, alerting the House to Bill S-229, which at first glance appears to infringe on the financial prerogative of the crown. The Chair stated that if, following an anticipated first reading of Bill S-229, the Chair determined that the bill was contrary to our usual rules and practices regarding money bills, the Chair would be obligated to disallow it being further considered in this House.

The parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government in the House of Commons also made representations and formally raised a point of order on this matter on May 12, 2107.

The rights and privileges of each House of Parliament respecting money bills are provided for in the Constitution. Sections 53 and 54 of the Constitution Act of 1867 state:

53. Bills for appropriating any Part of the Public Revenue, or for imposing any Tax or Impost, shall originate in the House of Commons.

54. It shall not be lawful for the House of Commons to adopt or pass any Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill for the Appropriation of any Part of the Public Revenue, or of any Tax or Impost, to any Purpose that has not been first recommended to that House by Message of the Governor General in the Session in which such Vote, Resolution, Address, or Bill is proposed.

Points of Order

The Standing Orders of the House of Commons reflect in part those provisions. I refer to Standing Orders 79 and 80. Standing Order 79(1) states:

This House shall not adopt or pass any vote, resolution, address or bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or of any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the House by a message from the Governor General in the session in which such vote, resolution, address or bill is proposed.

Standing Order 80(1) states:

All aids and supplies granted to the Sovereign by the Parliament of Canada are the sole gift of the House of Commons, and all bills for granting such aids and supplies ought to begin with the House, as it is the undoubted right of the House to direct, limit, and appoint in all such bills, the ends, purposes, considerations, conditions, limitations and qualifications of such grants, which are not alterable by the Senate.

Bill S-229 includes a special coming into force provision that states in clause 33:

(1) Subject to subsection (2), the provisions of this Act come into force on a day or days to be fixed by order of the Governor in Council.

(2) No order may be made under subsection (1) unless the appropriation of moneys for the purposes of this Act has been recommended by the Governor General and such moneys have been appropriated by Parliament.

I would like to raise a preliminary point respecting the role and the authority of the Speaker of this House. It is a well-established principle of parliamentary law and procedure that our Speaker does not rule on questions of law but rather rules on questions of procedure.

The Speaker indicated in a statement to the House on May 9, 2017, that should he determine that Bill S-229 was:

...contrary to our usual rules and practices regarding money bills, I would be obligated to disallow them to be further considered in the House. Specifically, it would be incumbent on me to order them removed from the Order Paper and any consideration of them ended.

With respect, there is no Standing Order that would allow the Chair to remove Bill S-229 from the Order Paper unless the Chair acted under the sole authority of section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which, in my opinion, would be contrary to the principle stated above that the Chair does not rule on questions of law.

●(1620)

The current situation is different from those you alluded to in your statement. I refer to rulings from your predecessors, Speaker Parent, respecting Bill S-13, on December 2, 1998, and Speaker Milliken, respecting Bill S-15, on June 12, 2001.

In those cases, while the Chair referred to the relevant constitutional provisions, the rulings were based on the requirement for taxation bills to be preceded by a ways and means motion, which is a requirement under our Standing Orders. As no such motion had been adopted, these Senate bills were ruled out of order. However, Bill S-229 is not a taxation bill.

I respectfully submit that should you decide that Bill S-229 is not a money bill, without a procedural rule to that effect, it belongs to this House, and not the Chair, to decide whether it will insist on its rights and privileges as provided for in sections 53 and 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867.

Points of Order

I recognize, however, that Standing Order 79(1) requires that you do not put the question at third reading if you decide that Bill S-229 is a money bill. Letting Bill S-229 go through the legislative process in this House would also allow for the consideration of the provisions of this bill and would provide an opportunity to amend or remove any provisions that may appear contrary to the financial initiative of the House and the crown.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, in his remarks of May 12, referred to page 769 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states:

An amendment intended to alter the coming into force clause of a bill, making it conditional, is out of order

With due respect to my colleague, this is not such a case. Bill S-229 already contains a coming into force clause that is conditional. This House is not seized with an amendment that would render an already existing coming into force clause conditional.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons also referred to a ruling rendered by the Chair on November 9, 1978, to assert that the use of a provision in the bill to elude the requirement for a royal recommendation had been ruled unacceptable. In that case, a bill, Bill C-204, contained a provision that read, “nothing in the present Act shall be interpreted as requiring” an appropriation of any part of the public revenue.

The Chair, however, did not rule this practice to be unacceptable but instead stated that such a clause “will not be given any consideration in determining whether or not there is any infringement of the financial initiative of the Crown.”

I would note that the Chair, in this particular case, allowed the consideration of Bill C-204 to be continued.

Standing Order 79(1) states:

This House shall not adopt or pass any...bill for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue...to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the House by a message from the Governor General in the session in which such...bill is proposed.

The effect of the coming into force clause included in Bill S-229 would be that this bill would not appropriate any part of the public revenue. Another legislative enactment would be necessary to appropriate the required funds.

There have been two rulings rendered by the Speaker of the Senate respecting the effect of the coming into force clause included in Bill S-229, one respecting Bill S-234, on May 27, 2008, and another respecting Bill S-230, on May 5, 2009. I refer you to page 1087 of the *Journals of the Senate* of May 27, 2008, where Speaker Kinsella stated:

What Bill S-234 would actually do is set up a legal framework for subsequent action. Nothing can begin to happen to make this framework effective without a subsequent Royal Recommendation and appropriation by Parliament.

● (1625)

The Bill, itself, does not actually authorize the appropriation of any funds. While the passage of the Bill would express a will on the part of Parliament to establish an aboriginal peoples' assembly and an executive council, the Crown would not actually be obliged to give the necessary Recommendation, so its initiative would not be impaired. If the Governor General did recommend the necessary funds, and Parliament appropriated them, that would have the known effect of allowing the Bill to be brought into force, with the resulting consequences.

Bill S-234 thus appears to respect fully the financial initiative of the Crown, since no funds are being or must be appropriated.

Our own procedural authorities are to the same effect and were relied upon by the Speaker of the other place in his ruling.

Citation 611 of *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, states:

A bill from the Senate, certain clauses of which would necessitate some public expenditure, is in order if it is provided by a clause of the said bill that no such expenditure shall be made unless previously sanctioned by Parliament.

Beauchesne also referred to a ruling rendered on April 5, 1870, by Speaker Cockburn, which is highly relevant to the present case. The last clause in the first section of the bill provides:

That nothing in this Act shall give the authority to the Minister to cause expenditure until previously sanctioned by Parliament.

This overrides the eighth section referred to by the hon. member. No contract could therefore be entered into under that section, which could bind government and necessitate an expenditure of public money unless it had previously been sanctioned by Parliament.

With respect to Bill S-229, the proposal is not even a money bill, as it merely contemplates the minister entering into an agreement but does not directly involve any expenditure.

In his remarks, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons stated:

Clause 17 of Bill S-229, an act respecting underground infrastructure safety, authorizes the minister to enter into agreements, including funding agreements, that the minister considers necessary for carrying out the purposes of the act. Subclause 17(2) provides greater detail around the operation of such funding agreements between the federal government and the provincial governments. These specific purposes are not authorized by any statute or appropriation.

Citation 613 of *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, reads:

A bill, which does not involve a direct expenditure but merely confers upon the government a power for the exercise of which public money will have to be voted [on] by Parliament, is not a money bill, and no Royal Recommendation is necessary as a condition precedent to its introduction.

In support of this, I refer to the ruling of Speaker Sproule, rendered on January 16, 1912, respecting the Inquiries Act, authorizing the Governor in Council to establish commissions of inquiries by orders in council. Neither the 1912 Inquiries Act, which was a consolidation of two statutes, nor its 1868 or 1880 predecessors, had received a royal recommendation. I note that the 1868 act had also been introduced in the Senate.

Bill S-229 is no different from those precedents.

In many cases, a separate appropriation bill, based on the main or supplementary estimates, is necessary, otherwise the new organization cannot undertake its activities.

● (1630)

I refer, for example, to the Law Commission of Canada. While the Law Commission of Canada Act was passed by Parliament in 1996, the activities of the commission were always dependent on appropriations voted every year by Parliament. In 2006, when the government did not seek appropriations from Parliament and appropriations were, accordingly, not granted for the operations of the commission, the commission had to cease its activities, and all the while the Law Commission of Canada Act remained, and in fact still remains, in the law books.

For these reasons, I respectfully submit that Bill S-229 is admissible and should not be ruled out of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member for Guelph for raising this point of order. I will take the information provided under advisement on Bill S-229. I am sure that it will be of assistance in researching the issue and preparing for a decision.

[Translation]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Aboriginal Affairs; the member for Cumberland—Colchester, Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

INDIAN ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Indian Act (elimination of sex-based inequities in registration), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Motions Nos. 1 to 4 will be regrouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has informed the Chair that she does not wish to proceed with Motion No. 1.

[Translation]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill S-3, in Clause 2, be amended

(a) by adding after line 4 on page 2 the following:

“(a.1) that person was born prior to April 17, 1985 and is a direct descendant of the person referred to in paragraph (a) or of a person referred to in paragraph 11(1) (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) or (f), as each provision read immediately prior to April 17, 1985;”;

(b) by adding after line 18 on page 5 the following:

“(4.1) Section 6 of the Act is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The purpose of paragraph (1)(a.1) is to entitle to registration under paragraph (1)(a) those persons who were previously not entitled to registration under paragraph (1)(a) as a result of the preferential treatment accorded to Indian men over Indian women born prior to April 17, 1985, and to patrilineal descendants over matrilineal descendants born prior to April 17, 1985.”

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by Mr. Beaulieu, moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill S-3, in Clause 2, be amended

(a) by adding after line 4 on page 2 the following:

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“(a.1) that person was born prior to April 17, 1985, and is a direct descendant of the person referred to in paragraph (a) or of a person referred to in paragraph 11(1) (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) or (f), as each provision read immediately prior to April 17, 1985;”;

(b) by adding after line 18 on page 5 the following:

“(4.1) Section 6 of the Act is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) The purpose of paragraph (1)(a.1) is to entitle to registration under paragraph (1)(a) those persons who were previously not entitled to registration under paragraph (1)(a) as a result of the preferential treatment accorded to Indian men over Indian women born prior to April 17, 1985, and to patrilineal descendants over matrilineal descendants born prior to April 17, 1985, including, in particular, persons who were not entitled to be registered on the ground that

(a) they were female persons who were married to a person who was not registered;

(b) they were persons whose mother was registered but whose parents were not married to each other at the time of their birth;

(c) they were female persons whose father was registered but whose parents were not married to each other at the time of their birth; or

(d) they were female persons who were married to a person who was enfranchised under this Act as it read immediately before April 17, 1985, or under any former provision of this Act relating to the same subject matter.”

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP) moved:

That Bill S-3 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Madam Speaker, [*member spoke in aboriginal language*]

[Translation]

First, I could not help reiterating my disappointment in the Speaker's ruling on the question of privilege raised by the member for Winnipeg Centre. I am going to accommodate the House and repeat my message in both official languages.

It is all the more disappointing that it has been decided, with unprecedented and delicate irony, on the eve of National Aboriginal Day, that I will no longer have the right to speak my own language here in the House of Commons. This is frustrating, not to say insulting, because my language has been spoken for 7,000 years. It was spoken before a word of French or English was ever spoken in this country that we now call Canada.

[English]

I am going to accommodate the House.

This afternoon, the Speaker rendered his ruling on the question of privilege that was raised by the member for Winnipeg Centre, which is extremely disappointing, especially on the eve of National Aboriginal Day.

On the very eve of National Aboriginal Day 2017, in this country that you now call Canada, I am told that there are only two official languages in this place, and that I cannot speak the language that has been spoken in this country, on this territory, for the last 7,000 years, even before a single word in English or French was heard in this place. In this country, that you now call Canada, I am told that I cannot use my language. Allow me to express my disappointment.

Government Orders

Tomorrow is a sacred day for all indigenous peoples in this country. It is so sacred. However, hearing this ruling from the Speaker was the most terrible thing I have heard in this chamber in the six years that I have been sitting in this place. In fact, if members want to know, the words in Cree for the Speaker of the House is [*Member spoke in Cree*] which means “the boss of those who speak in the House”.

However, I rise again on Bill S-3, which is a bill that should eliminate any gender inequities in the Indian Act.

●(1640)

In doing so, I need to refer to a couple aspects of where we are at this moment as we speak. As we know, there were important amendments that stemmed from the work of the Senate, important amendments that not only attempted to respond to the Quebec Superior Court ruling in the Descheneaux case, but also addressed the other inequities and discriminations that exist under the Indian Act.

That was the purpose of the amendments submitted by the Senate. Unfortunately, the majority Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs decided that those amendments were unacceptable. That is very unfortunate, because discrimination in this country should not even be allowed in 2017. That is so unjust. That is one aspect that I will be talking about in the remaining time I have.

There is also the aspect of the liability of the crown, which needs to be addressed. It is one of the most important calls to action of the TRC. It is number 26 of the TRC which deals with this aspect. Again, it is a provision that is included in the amendments that are before us. I believe it is a proposition to accept human rights violations that were done in the past and accept them in 2017. In all conscience, I as an indigenous person will never accept that proposition. We cannot justify past wrongs, past human rights violations in this place in 2017. Wrongs of the past are wrongs. We cannot say today to forget about them and move on. That is not how it works.

The other aspect I would like to address in the couple of minutes I have left is the fact that the government is telling us to trust it, that there is a second phase coming up, and it will deal with the other concerns that we are talking about six months after this bill is ratified by the Senate. Again, who else is asked that their human rights be delayed once again? Indigenous women in this country have waited for so long. Now we are asking again to do away with their human rights, that we will deal with them later on. That is absolutely unacceptable. On this side of the House, that cannot be accepted.

Let me quote one of our expert witnesses who came before us, Pam Palmater. She had this to say to our committee:

How many more times are you going to require that indigenous women spend their entire lives trying to get equality, in a country where equality is actually the law?

We do not have a choice here. This issue should in fact be moot. There is a very clear message here. The fact the government or any committee would be wondering or considering delaying equality for one more day shows exactly how ingrained sexism and racism is in this country, and especially for indigenous women.

The provisions that were truncated from the proposed Senate amendments were once accepted by both the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the Minister of Justice. In fact, this is what the Minister of Justice said to Parliament back in 2010. She insisted that Parliament eradicate discrimination wherever and whenever possible. Now she has changed her mind. The proposition that I have before us is the very minimum that we need this House to adopt.

●(1645)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for his work on this file. I have worked with him on committee in the previous Parliament. I remember his eloquent words as a survivor of residential schools, and I listened to his eloquent words again today in three languages, which we appreciate here because of the work he is doing with respect to languages. Once a language is lost, we know that it is lost forever. Therefore, I hope we can all work together in this place to find solutions to the issues that he has raised.

I want to ask the member a question with respect to the decision by the government not to seek an extension of the July 3 deadline for the implementation of this bill, when it was offered by the court, and when the plaintiff had gone back to court to seek an extension on behalf of the government. Could he comment on the failure of the government to seek that extension, and what are his views with respect to that decision?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Madam Speaker, what I understand from what is going on here is that we are heading toward a battle between the Senate and the House as we speak, because this is what the Senate wants, but it is not what the government wants. Second, the government has botched the obligation that we have to correct the Indian Act. The Liberals did not move on this after they were elected. They waited 18 months before doing anything about it, and here we are today hard-pressed to adopt what they think should be adopted.

Finally, I know that hearings were held yesterday and today, and that the Quebec Superior Court dismissed the motion to extend Parliament's deadline for eliminating sex discrimination. However, the judge, Chantal Masse, emphasized that she remains available to hear another motion for an extension before the deadline of July 3. That is important to know, because what we have before us as we speak, which was proposed by the current majority government, is a botched proposal, and we need to start over again.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague not only for his speech today but also for his contributions to the debate on this bill. He understands this very well. He knows the time limits the government is working toward. Therefore, in his opinion, should the government not honour the court ruling, and move forward with the acceptance of the 35,000 individuals who have currently been waiting up to two years for this?

Government Orders

•(1650)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Madam Speaker, I understand the parliamentary secretary's question and where she is coming from. However, one of the things she fails to mention in her question is that the Quebec Superior Court judge said that we needed to look beyond fixing the issue with respect to the Descheneaux case, so it does not preclude the possibility of fixing other things that are problematic in the Indian Act.

The parliamentary secretary fails to understand that. However, I understand it. I do not think that discrimination should continue in this country. This is a country that recognizes equality for all. That includes indigenous women. If she thinks we should not proceed right away with that, and that we need to consult with respect to the human rights of indigenous women and indigenous women alone, that is problematic for me, and goes against the rule of law in this country.

As members of Parliament, we are called upon to uphold the rule of law. That includes respecting the Constitution, which includes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and section 35 rights as well. Therefore, there is a lot of work that needs to be done. That is where I am coming from. I know she has a limited view of how we should proceed.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place to put my views forward following the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. He said exactly, in much clearer, more passionate language and with greater depth of experience, the reasons that I am also putting forward amendments to try to repair Bill S-3, so that it does not perpetuate gender-based discrimination against indigenous women and their descendants.

As members know, Bill S-3 comes to us as a result of yet another court case raising the issue of discrimination under the Indian Act. Let us step back for a moment and acknowledge the Indian Act itself is a monument to discrimination. The Indian Act is a racist piece of legislation, and I grieve that we are not as a Parliament taking on the challenge of eliminating the spectre of a piece of legislation about which many Canadians may not know. It was a piece of legislation on which South Africa modelled apartheid. It needs to be replaced, it needs to be gone, but what we have before us is a slice of that discrimination that is embedded in a discriminatory act which treats indigenous women and their descendants quite differently than it treats indigenous men.

The case was brought to the Quebec court by Stéphane Descheneaux. The court set a deadline, the case was heard and resolved in 2015. The deadline was extended once, and as we just heard in my hon. colleague's comments in response to a question, just today the plaintiff returned to court, and asked if Madam Judge Masse would extend that deadline once again. As the deadline now sits, this Parliament needs to resolve the matter by July 3, or there will be consequences in the issuing of status cards, and there will be unacceptable consequences. On the other hand, it is certainly distressing and incomprehensible to me that given how flawed the bill is that the Government of Canada has not gone to the court to ask for an extension.

Should we be able in this place now to accept either my amendment, or the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, then at least we have a piece of legislation which does not perpetuate gender discrimination. If we accept those amendments and the government feels it creates a tremendous chaos out there, we are not sure where we are going to go next. It does not have to move forward on the legislation, all it has to do is go to the judge and ask for an extension.

The Quebec court in this matter has made it very clear as of less than an hour ago, when the press conference from the plaintiff took place, that it is ready and willing to give an extension. The judge was not willing to give an extension on the deadline today on an application from the plaintiff, because she did not want to put the Quebec Superior Court in the position of arbitrating between the Senate of Canada and the House of Commons. It is very clear, very fresh and pertinent, and timely information that the extension could be had if the government seeks it. I would wish the government would seek it.

However, let us go back to why these amendments really matter. It is a question of justice. It is a question of discrimination, and it is a question of whether we can draw a line in the sand and accept all the historical wrongs that happened if someone was a descendant based on relationships before 1951. Before 1951, we are just going to say that it does not matter anymore, and we are going to limit it to 35,000 people, because that is a manageable number. This is something I have never seen before in any debate on rights, that we only give fairness to X number of people, and we are not prepared to extend it to all the people. It is unconscionable.

I want to go back, and my colleague has already mentioned the testimony of Professor Pam Palmater, who is uniquely qualified in this debate not only because she is a distinguished lawyer and professor, and comes from the territory of the Mi'kmaq First Nation in Nova Scotia, but she has written a book which directly bears on this. Her book is *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity*.

•(1655)

Her research has shown that, for example, and I will quote her:

The hierarchy of Indian status between section 6(1) and 6(2) have and continue to disproportionately impact Indigenous women and their descendants since its creation in 1985. It is an unconscionable formula based on racist ideas related to blood quantum that were designed to legislate Indians out of existence.

She is referring to sections of the Indian Act. She goes on to say:

As a result, Canada's own demographer can pin point with relative accuracy the extinction dates of each First Nation in Canada based on birth, death and out-marriage rates.

Some might wonder what out-marriage means. The essence of this discrimination is that, if a first nations man marries a non-indigenous woman, their children continue to be recognized as Indians for the purpose of the Indian Act, but if a first nations woman marries a non-indigenous man, the children are not recognized. Further, with respect to children of unwed mothers who are not willing or able to name the father, or fathers who deny paternity, we go through a whole hierarchy of subtractions, subtraction of indigenous women's rights through a hierarchy of different classes of people.

Government Orders

If my amendment or the amendments put forward by the NDP are accepted, we could restore at least those pieces of Bill S-3 that were put forward in the Senate. They were supported by the Senate but removed from the bill by the government. They are what would make it possible to support Bill S-3 and get it through the House. With those removed, we are back in a situation where the defence that I hear from the government is that there will simply be too many people and we will not know quite how many there are. As I said, this cannot be a question of numbers.

Again, from evidence that was heard in the Senate committee, if the estimate is 200,000 people instead of 35,000 people who have rights through ancestry and parenthood once historic discrimination against women is removed, that is roughly equivalent to the number of new immigrants we take into Canada every year. We need to put 200,000 into some context. Why would we deny rights based on the question that this might be too many new people?

The fundamental crying need in this area of law is to get rid of the Indian Act, and then we could be talking about how to move forward from here. However, we are dealing only with this piece based on the court decision and the court case brought by Stephane Descheneaux. It seems to me that we do not have any choice other than to eliminate gender-based discrimination.

In the minute I have left, I want to turn again to the words of Professor Palmater, because it could not be clearer. She said:

There is no reason to consult on whether to abide by the law of gender equality. The laws of our traditional Nations, Canada and the international community are clear on gender equality. There is no optioning out of equality, nor can it be negotiated away. Traditional Indigenous Nations did not permit inequality between genders. The constitutionally-protected Aboriginal right to determine one's own citizens is conditioned on section 35(4)'s guarantee of equality for Indigenous men and women.

Of course, that is section 35(4) of the Canadian Constitution.

UNDRIP which provides extensive protections for indigenous peoples also guarantees these rights equally between Indigenous men and women.

I want to underscore this sentence from Professor Palmater's testimony, "There is simply no legal mechanism by which to consult out of gender equality."

She went on to say:

Discrimination is discrimination—whether five layers of discrimination are piled on top of us or "only" one layer—Indigenous women and our descendants bear an unfair burden of trying to convince others it should end.

I urge every member of the House to vote for the amendments, and then we can pass Bill S-3 with a clear conscience.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Minister of National Revenue on a point of order.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2016 report on exports of military goods from Canada and the 2016 annual report to Parliament on the administration of the Export and Import Permits Act.

[*English*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask a question for the member opposite. The Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs has said time and time again that it is her intention to correct all of the discriminatory pieces that are contained within the Indian Act over a two-phase process. Will the member opposite support that process to ensure proper consultation with all people who have asked to be involved and to ensure that their voices are heard as we move to stage two of the changes that need to be made within the bill?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, first let me just say once again that there is no need for haste. We do not need to deal with this now. We merely need to ask the court. The court has made it clear that it is more than willing to give an extension, but on this concept of phase two, again I want to turn to the testimony of Professor Palmater:

If we don't address gender equality now, it will never be addressed. Canada's plans to shove "complex" gender issues to Phase II under the impossible standard of "consensus" means we'll never see full gender equality.

I thought the whole intent of reconciliation was to do better by indigenous peoples. If this is the case then we have no real choice but to remedy all gender discrimination in Bill S-3. That is what I am committed to. I am trying to remedy the gender discrimination in Bill S-3.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague said we simply need to ask for an extension. I think the government deserves lots of criticism on this particular file. I think there is lots of room where things could have and should have been done better, but there was an extension requested and the government was given five months. To be frank, the five months did not allow the opportunity to do the work that needed to be done.

Certainly, we heard from the officials that the bill did go beyond Descheneaux and added a number of other circumstances. They indicated that all known sex-based inequities have been dealt with in the bill.

I am not convinced about simply asking for an extension, if it is five months, when there is a proposal that the next phase happen over 18 to 22 months. I do not think we would have an alignment with an extension that would be granted and really the time to do the necessary work that has to be done.

• (1705)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, there is a lot of blame to go around in the handling of indigenous issues in this country. I think it is not too late to ask the court for that extension in order to ensure that, when the Liberals bring forward a piece of legislation, the questions are answered about how it would be applied.

Government Orders

It is clear that we know that eliminating all gender discrimination, which I think should be the goal, in this piece of legislation should not even be a question. It is a matter of law, so we should do it. However, I recognize the bending over backwards; and I also recognize, by the way, good intentions on the part of the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. I just do not think it cuts it to decide we will only go halfway on resolving gender discrimination. It requires full, historical redress for gender discrimination.

I was also remiss in not acknowledging, as I began my words here, that we are here on unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, noting the words of Sharon McIvor, who asked why consult on whether people can continue to be discriminated against, I will ask my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands if there is any reason to not either adopt the perfected bill as adopted and proposed by the Senate, which was informed by indigenous women, or else ask for an extension but not adopt a flawed bill, as is put before us by the government.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, Sharon McIvor, as a witness to the Senate committee, and with all the work she has done for all these years, has it exactly right, as do most of the witnesses who came before the committee. I certainly thank the Senate for its hard work to improve the bill.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising to speak to Bill S-3 because it is a very important bill and one that, with these amendments and changes, will foster tremendous progress for many indigenous people in Canada. It is an act to amend the Indian Act, and it focuses on the elimination of sex-based inequities in registration. This is something that has been ongoing for many years. Both the current Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the current Minister of Justice have fought very hard over the years to ensure that sex-based inequities in registration would be eliminated. Today, we are bringing forward amendments that would allow that to happen. They have also both said they remain committed to ensuring we correct all discrimination contained within the Indian Act. That will be done in a stage-two process.

Members are asking today that several amendments be added. We need to understand that the bill today is about removing the discriminatory aspects that are related to sex-based discrimination and that the amendments that are currently being proposed by the members are outside the scope of the intended bill. It is important to note that, as a government, we recognize that changes within the Indian Act need to go much further than where this legislation is bringing us today. We have said that time and again. The government and the minister have committed very clearly, both in the House of Commons and in committee, that they would have a stage-two process to deal with those discriminatory pieces that have to be removed from the act.

They also said that charter compliance will be the floor of that stage-two process, and not the ceiling. In other words, the government has been clear that consensus will not be a prerequisite for action, but in the absence of consensus, it is more important that decisions are based on the foundation of meaningful consultation and credible evidence about the potential impacts of reform.

We are here today with Bill S-3 because of the Descheneaux decision. It was a case filed by the Descheneaux family, in which the court put upon the government several conditions for change that had to occur within the Indian Act. The former government was appealing those decisions. Our government said we would not appeal those decisions of the court because we need to correct those discriminatory clauses within the bill. We were the first government in the seven-year process that has been going on that has stepped up and said we are going to remove it. We are prepared to act on it. We will meet the conditions of the Descheneaux ruling. That is what we are doing today with Bill S-3.

Members opposite asked why the government does not go to the judge and ask for an extension. We did go and ask for an extension, and we were granted an extension, one that allowed us to look at other aspects of the bill, consult with a number of people, and further define within the scope of the ruling some of the changes that needed to be made. We were happy to do that. We know the other groups went to the judge and asked for a further extension, and today, although there was a caveat in the decision, I understand the judge denied that extension.

We are in the House today debating Bill S-3. It is a bill that would help us progress a step further in ending sex-based discrimination against indigenous women who are registering with the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and registering for benefits. This bill alone would allow 35,000 more indigenous people to claim the benefits to which they are entitled.

• (1710)

For the last two years, they have been waiting to access the benefits and the services they are entitled to as indigenous people in Canada, but have not been able to because we have not defined those changes in law.

Today, we are making those changes in law. We are allowing the entitlements and benefits for these thousands of indigenous people who have been neglected for a very long time. Many of them have been waiting for years. As we know, the Descheneaux decision went on in the courts for many years and was fought by the Harper government. It would not accept any changes within the Indian Act as it was relative to discrimination.

When this bill went to the Senate, some amendments were proposed. Those amendments were struck down at the committee stage of the House of Commons. Despite supporting a number of the amendments proposed by the Senate, the government made it clear that it could not support one amendment that was put forward by Senator McPhedran and accepted by the committee. The intent of Senator McPhedran's amendment to clause one of Bill S-3 was to implement the approach commonly referred to as "6(1)(a) all the way".

While there is no question that this amendment was put forward with the best of intentions, and I know it was, the way this clause is drafted creates ambiguity as to whether it will do what it apparently intends to do.

Government Orders

When the bar association testified before the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and I was at committee that day, its representative cautioned against simply inserting that proposed amendment in its current form into the legislation. In fact, the members of the Indigenous Bar Association who testified went on to say, “You run into technical problems with the language by simply inserting that into a bill because you run the risk of inconsistencies or some unintended consequences with that.”

If the clause is interpreted in a way to implement the “6(1)(a) all the way” approach, then it could potentially extend status to a broad range of individuals impacted by a wide range of alleged inequities, well beyond those that are sex-based. That approach seeks to address non-sex based issues, of which we realize some need to be addressed, but it is well outside of the scope of what Bill S-3 is intended to do.

The approach was explicitly rejected by the British Columbia Court of Appeal in the McIvor decision, where it was clear that under the current state of law, this remedy was not required to make the Indian Act registration provisions charter compliant. That is very important to note in this debate.

The Supreme Court of Canada refused leave to appeal, but this does not mean the government will not consider this as a potential approach in the context of a policy decision to address the broader registration and membership reform. When the minister testified before the Senate committee, she said:

I think it could be 6(1)(a) all the way. But we don't have enough information to make that decision, the scholarly approach that it would take to look at the impacts and make sure that it didn't impact others accidentally in a different way.

Our government is taking a responsible approach. We have agreed to go through a stage two approach. We do not currently have all the demographic information to understand the practical implications of such a decision at this time, but it is our job to ensure we do. We know what we are doing today is going to have profound and positive impacts on indigenous communities across Canada and many people. We also know our commitment to stage two will also have very profound and positive impacts for indigenous people.

● (1715)

The amendments proposed today are outside the scope of the government's agenda and its intention. We ask all members to support the bill as it is and support the direction of the government to bring justice to indigenous people.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, it was our Conservative government that gave women living on reserve the same matrimonial real property rights as other Canadian women living off reserve, something the Liberals voted against.

When the Liberals were in opposition, in response to Bill C-3, which dealt with McIvor case, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs brought forward those exact same amendments, which senators have brought forward to amend Bill S-3.

Could the member tell us what has changed between now and then, other than she now sits on that side of the House of Commons?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question gives me the opportunity to remind people in our country that it was

his government that fought against the elimination of sex-based inequities in registration for years.

The government, under former Prime Minister Harper, spent hundreds and thousands of dollars of taxpayer money fighting indigenous people and indigenous women to ensure they did not eliminate those clauses.

We removed the bill from the courts. We are making the changes that are necessary on sex-based inequities. We are going to continue with this process, into stage two, to do what is right and just for indigenous women in Canada.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, could the parliamentary secretary name a single indigenous women's organization that endorses the approach of the Liberals?

The government failed to ask anybody, any woman who had been a litigant in these cases for 40 years. They were not consulted on any element of the bill. The Senate ended up perfecting it.

Who is actually onboard in the women's movement with the government approach? At a press conference on June 8, Pam Palmater said that the Prime Minister and INAC minister claimed to be feminists and promised to respect the rule of law, but this was inconsistent with the minister's rigid non-negotiable approach. They said, again and again, that gender rights were human rights. They are not up for consultation.

How does the parliamentary secretary respond to that very strong criticism?

● (1720)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that many women out there today will benefit as a result of the changes we are making in the bill.

Will it go as far as we would like it to go at this current time? No, it will not. When representatives of NWAC testified before committee, and I was there that day, they said that they wanted to correct all the discriminatory pieces in the Indian Act, however, they would support the bill going to the House without being withdrawn at that time.

This question was put to them. Should we not proceed with this bill at this time? If I had the correct words, I would say them, but the answer was very simple, and that was that we should proceed.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Labrador for reiterating once again in the House the government's commitment to ending all discrimination in the Indian Act.

Government Orders

Could my hon. colleague elaborate on the reasons why a two-faced approach will allow us to go even further than the Senate amendment, to reduce ambiguity, to ensure there is even more inclusiveness, and to take into consideration the rights of trans or two-spirited women? Could the member also expand on why it is so important, to take the time to get it right in the second phase to ensure we do not end up with more litigation and more women being denied their rights?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, if the legislation, which addresses the charter issues outlined in the Descheneaux decision, is not passed before the date that has been struck by the court, the practical implication will be that these provisions will then become inoperative within Canada, as the registrar will not be in a position to register people on the provisions found to be non-charter compliant.

As well, to the member's other question, going into stage two allows us to do full consultation to deal with all the other discriminatory pieces that are in the Indian Act and to correct them in a proper manner, with proper input from people.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been a member of the House since 2014. In that time as MP, I have seen two different governments and served on three different committees. In all that time, I have never seen a bill studied and pre-studied as many times as Bill S-3. I am not sure how the government will handle phase two, considering how Bill S-3 is turning out.

Many Canadians believe the Indian Act is a good document, meant to help the indigenous people of our country. What they do not realize is how destructive, toxic, and racist this document truly is.

The Indian Act is present in the everyday lives of most indigenous Canadians, often governing their education, health care, and every service that really matters to average Canadians. With this power, the government could do a lot of good across our nation for most vulnerable people in our society. Despite the potential and outstanding recommendations of indigenous communities across the country, I have rarely heard anything good about Bill S-3 without the amendments.

When I joined the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, I was joined by many new members of Parliament. Many of these members came from backgrounds and regions where indigenous knowledge was not as common. To fill the gap, the committee heard from experts across the country.

The Indian Act controls all aspects of aboriginal lives, with limitations on social, traditional, and economic activities. I can say with confidence that the majority of indigenous people across the country want either major revisions to the Indian Act or want it scrapped entirely so we can build a new solution from the ground up, with thorough consultations along the way.

When I joined the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, it was my hope that I would have the ability to right some of the wrongs the Indian Act created. Bill S-3 seemed like an opportunity to do that when our committee began studying the issues almost a year ago

. When the committee began studying Bill S-3, it was clear that the government was in a rush. It had to meet a looming February 3

deadline, imposed by the Superior Court of Quebec after the government lost the Descheneaux v. Canada case. The case revolved around Indian Act discrimination against women.

What many people do not know is that the Indian Act does not categorize all aboriginals the same way. The government registry differentiates between status Indians, by categorizing them as either 6(1) or 6(2). Before 1985, people could lose their status when they married, depending on gender. Even with the changes, there were outstanding issues. This creates a situation where some cousins would have status while others did not, even though each person had one status parent and one non-status parent.

Descheneaux v. Canada arose because even with the changes in 1985, the Indian Act still robbed people of status due to sex discrimination before 1985. In the Stéphane Descheneaux case, his grandmother had lost her status by marrying a non-indigenous man in 1935 and because his mother was not status, he was not a status Indian either. If we replaced his grandmother with a grandfather, Mr. Descheneaux would be a status Indian today.

Descheneaux v. Canada also brought up the case of Susan and Tammy Yantha, which the Calgary law blog outlined as an issue created by “The version of the Indian Act in force in 1954 held that illegitimate daughters of Status Indian men and non-Status Indian women would not have Status, while illegitimate sons would have 6 (1) Status.”

It was clear to the Superior Court of Quebec that changing the sex of someone in both these stories to male would mean they would have a very different relationship with Indigenous and Northern Affairs because they would be status Indian and fully entitled to the benefits that had been withheld from them.

Therefore, this was a violation of section 15 of the charter, which states:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

The Indian Act is still enforcing discrimination based on sex, which is unconstitutional. Imagine if this rule were applied to being a Canadian citizen. I can assure that this would be resolved quickly. We would not need pre-study after pre-study. We would get it done immediately.

● (1725)

When the committee met first with Indigenous and Northern Affairs officials, the officials described the case and what the bill addressed: differential treatment of first cousins whose grandmother lost status due to marriage to a non-Indian when the marriage occurred before April 17, 1985; differential treatment of women who were born out of wedlock of Indian fathers between September 4, 1951, and April 17, 1985; and differential treatment of minor children compared to their adult or married siblings who were born of Indian parents or of an Indian mother but lost entitlement to Indian status because their mother married a non-Indian after their birth between September 4, 1951, and April 17, 1985.

Government Orders

The assistant deputy minister of the resolution and individual affairs sector, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, said that this was just one part of a two-phase process that would take up to 18 months to complete. She also said that the court deadline did “not allow for sufficient time to conduct meaningful consultations”. Even though the department had not entered into meaningful consultations, the deputy minister, when asked if the bill actually did what it claimed to do—eliminate sex-based inequities in registration—said that she was confident.

The next witness was Stéphane Descheneaux, the plaintiff in the case. Right off the bat, he made it clear that he had first heard of the bill only two weeks before appearing at committee. In that short amount of time, he and others had already identified apparent flaws in the legislation.

I have heard the government lecture about consulting for hours. The Prime Minister has shaken many hands and signed a variety of

documents with indigenous people across the country. He often followed up these events by repeating that he is focused on a nation-to-nation relationship and consulting. Bill S-3, to me, is an example of a bill that indigenous people should have been part of during its drafting. If the government had spent—

● (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I have to stop the speaker at this point. However, the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake will have three minutes to finish his speech when this is back before the House, which will be later on today.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

[For continuation of proceedings see part B]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 20, 2017
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.) moved that Bill S-232, An Act respecting Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to be here today as we consider Bill S-232, an act respecting Canadian Jewish heritage month, and I am honoured to be the sponsor of this bill in the House.

I want to acknowledge Senator Linda Frum, who has partnered with me in introducing this bill, which received unanimous support in the other place. I hope today to convince members of the chamber to give it the same enthusiastic support.

I want to particularly thank the hon. members for Thornhill and Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke for their strong multipartisan support of this bill. I also want to take a moment to recognize the efforts of my friend and mentor, the Hon. Irwin Cotler, whose tireless work as a defender of human rights is a badge of honour for the Canadian Jewish community. Professor Cotler originally introduced the substance of this bill as a motion in 2015. As I stand here today, I want to dedicate my efforts in bringing this bill before the House to Irwin Cotler's honour.

Aaron Hart, widely regarded as the first Jewish Canadian, settled in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, in 1760. In the more than 250 years since then, Jewish Canadians have been deeply involved in building this wonderful country that we are also privileged to call home. Whether coming to Canada in search of economic opportunity, freedom from persecution, or in service to the crown, Jewish Canadians from St. John's to Victoria to Yellowknife have played an active role in the unfolding Canadian story.

The early Jewish immigrants came predominantly from western and central Europe, followed in the late 19th century by increasing numbers of eastern Europeans. Approximately 20,000 Holocaust survivors made it to Canada, followed by Jewish refugees fleeing from the Middle East and North Africa. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Jewish immigration from North Africa, particularly Morocco, brought many francophone Sephardic Jews to Quebec. This group is now a large portion of Montreal's Jewish population and a small but

vibrant part of Toronto's Jewish community, including la Communauté Juive Marocaine de Toronto in my own riding.

Beginning in 1990, there was a significant Jewish migration to Canada from the Soviet Union, including the Russian Jewish community. Canada is home to nearly 60,000 Russian-speaking Jews, a thriving community represented by institutions like Toronto's Jewish Russian Community Centre. In 1983, my mother Edna and I left our home in Scotland to embark on, as she explained at the time, a great adventure. She brought me to Canada to build a better life and future for us both. Knowing barely a soul, we settled in Toronto because she knew there was a thriving Jewish community that would welcome us and provide us with the support we needed.

I am a proud Canadian, I am honoured to represent the people of York Centre in this House, and I am a proud Scottish Jew, a member of a small but mighty clan whose tartan I proudly wear here today. In many ways, the diversity of Jewish Canadians mirrors the mosaic of our broader Canadian society, each of us bringing with us our own customs and traditions and making Canada even better because of it.

Today I stand in this house as the member of Parliament for York Centre. I stand on the shoulders of the dedicated, brave, and committed Jewish men and women who paved the way before me. It is in their merit that I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

One of the most inspirational Jewish Canadians for me was the Hon. David Croll, who served as the Liberal member of Parliament representing the riding of Toronto—Spadina for a decade following World War II before being appointed Canada's first Jewish senator. Mr. Croll came to Canada when he was six years old, his family fleeing the pogroms of czarist Russia. Through hard work selling newspapers and polishing shoes, he was able to put himself through law school. In 1930, at the height of the Great Depression, Croll was elected mayor of Windsor, the first Jewish mayor in Ontario, where he instituted welfare programs for the jobless and the poor. Croll became a member of the provincial Parliament in 1934, where he served as Minister of Labour and Minister of Public Welfare, the first Jewish Canadian to be a minister of the crown.

● (1735)

In the first days of the Second World War, Mr. Croll enlisted with the Essex Scottish, one of more than 17,000 Jewish Canadians who answered the call to serve.

As a federal parliamentarian, Croll championed a range of social issues, from health care to pensions, from tax credits for the poor to prohibiting discrimination.

Private Members' Business

One of his greatest achievements, in my view, was in pushing for the opening of Canada's immigration regime. Between 1933 and 1948, under Canada's notorious "none is too many" policy, only 5,000 Holocaust refugees were admitted to Canada—the fewest of any western country. The most egregious example of this misguided policy happened in 1939 when Canada turned away the MS *St. Louis*. There were more than 900 Jewish refugees on board, seeking sanctuary here in Canada. They were turned away and forced to return to Europe, where 254 died in the Holocaust. We cannot turn away from this uncomfortable truth and Canada's part in it.

In 1949, however, Canada admitted 11,000 Jews—more than any other country, other than Israel.

Nate Leipziger is one of the survivors who came to Canada. Seventy-three years after having survived the lowest point of his life, Nate returned to Auschwitz, this time as the highest point in his life. He came back by invitation to guide and teach his Prime Minister, the head of government of his adopted country, about the horrors he endured and the lessons we must never forget. He described his return to Auschwitz last year with the Prime Minister as "triumphant". He said, "They gave me a one-way ticket, but I returned with my wife, daughter and granddaughter and the prime minister." He came full circle, from dehumanized to sharing some of the most poignant human moments, shedding tears with the Prime Minister.

We as Canadians must remember the lessons taught by history from this awful period. Monuments like the national Holocaust memorial, soon to be opened in Ottawa, and local ones like the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial at Earl Bales Park in Toronto form part of the legacy of survivors and their families. They came to Canada and became Canadians in their own right. Their stories are our stories as Canadians.

I am proud that my riding became home to so many Holocaust survivors, emerging from the ashes of Europe to begin building new, vibrant lives here in Canada.

Pola and Zalman Pila were two of them. They both survived the death camps and death marches and were reunited after liberation, the sole survivors of their families. They arrived in Toronto soon after, penniless, not speaking English, a married couple with an infant son. With little formal education, they worked day and night to make a life for their children and later their grandchildren. They took the shattered remnants of their lives and with faith, love, and determination built an inspiring future. Pola delivered food right to the doorsteps of those in need, visited the sick, and provided financial assistance to all who asked. Her contributions and the contributions of Jewish women to Canada have been tremendous.

Let us consider Bobbie Rosenfeld. She was known throughout the 1920s as the superwoman of ladies' hockey. In 1924 she helped form the Ladies Ontario Hockey Association, serving as its president until 1939. Rosenfeld won gold and silver medals at the 1928 Summer Olympics after setting multiple Canadian track and field records. She was also a trailblazer off the field, a strong advocate for women in sports. In 1950, Rosenfeld was voted Canada's female athlete of the half-century by *The Canadian Press*, which awards the Bobbie Rosenfeld Trophy to Canada's top female athlete every year.

I could go on listing the myriad contributions of Jewish-Canadian women like Tillie Taylor, the first woman to be appointed as a provincial magistrate in Saskatchewan, or Constance Glube, appointed the first female chief justice in Canada on the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia in 1980, or Justice Rosalie Abella, who was born in a German IDP camp and became the first Jewish woman to sit on the Supreme Court of Canada.

● (1740)

However, it is not just the individual achievements that should be celebrated. Indeed, the Jewish contribution to Canada has often been greatest when it has come as the product of communal action and furtherance of a shared purpose.

In 1868, just one year after Confederation, the Toronto Hebrew Ladies Sick and Benevolent Society was established. With no paid staff and a budget of only a few hundred dollars, these visionary women built the foundation of what would become one of the leading family service agencies in North America, Jewish Family and Child. Based in York Centre, I have had the privilege of seeing first-hand how JF&C continues to have a positive impact on the lives of thousands of vulnerable Canadians from every background. JF&C upholds the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, the idea that individuals are responsible not only for their own welfare but for the welfare of society at large.

It is one of several inspiring Jewish organizations in my riding that champion this ideal including B'nai Brith Canada, which can trace its roots to 1875; the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada, the first Jewish women's organization in Canada founded in 1897; and Canadian Hadassah-WIZO and the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, which are both celebrating 100 years of life-changing contributions to Canadian society.

These stories have played out in communities big and small across Canada. I am certain that every member of the House from every province and territory can point to the role that Jewish Canadians play in their communities. As celebrated as these stories are, a darker undercurrent of Canadian Jewish heritage must also be acknowledged. Canada has sadly not been immune to anti-Semitism, a scourge that remains stubbornly in our midst.

On June 13, Statistics Canada released hate crimes data for 2015. Jewish Canadians were once again the most targeted religious minority in the country. As a Jewish Canadian, I find this data to be doubly concerning. Throughout history, the level of anti-Semitism has been a fairly accurate barometer of the overall condition and health of a society. An attack against Jews or any minority is an attack on everyone.

In the face of this persistent problem, we must join together, and state unequivocally that when it comes to incidents of hate and discrimination in Canada, we cannot abide hate and prejudice being targeted against any group. Jewish Canadians have always been at the forefront of standing up and fighting against hate and discrimination.

Private Members' Business

Consider Canada's first Jewish parliamentarian, Ezekiel Hart, who in 1832 was instrumental in Quebec becoming the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to accord full political rights to Jews, 26 years before Great Britain. This commitment to universal equality, and the fight against hate and discrimination remains a core priority for Jewish Canadians and for me personally, standing here today as a result of Ezekiel Hart's activism.

It being pride month, I want to recognize the efforts of Kulanu Toronto, the voice of the Jewish LGBTQ community in Toronto. I had the honour of attending its pride shabbat dinner last week, a celebration of the Jewish LGBTQ community. This pride month, we can also celebrate Bill C-16, yesterday receiving royal assent affirming and protecting gender identity and expression under the Canadian Human Rights Act, and under hate crime sections of the Criminal Code. I am proud of the active role the Jewish community played in advancing this important legislation. The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs served on the steering committee of Trans Equality Canada, a coalition that has worked tirelessly to see this initiative succeed.

The stories I have shared here today are Canadian stories. The values they reflect are Canadian values. The enactment of Canadian Jewish heritage month will ensure that the historic and ongoing contributions of Jewish Canadians are recognized, shared, and celebrated across this great country, cementing their legacy and inspiring future generations to build a better Canada. I encourage my hon. colleagues in the House to support this bill.

• (1745)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Jewish heritage month is important for Windsor and Essex County. The Right Hon. Herb Gray served in my seat in this place. He was in fact the longest-serving member of Parliament. Designating someone as Right Honourable has only been done a few times and Herb Gray did receive that distinguished designation. He also served as a deputy prime minister of Canada.

Education is one of the most important elements of this Canadian Jewish heritage month. Unfortunately, the reality is that we are still seized in this country with some issues with respect to anti-Semitism.

I would like the member to highlight some of the things that could be done during Canadian Jewish heritage month. It would be a good opportunity to focus on anti-Semitism. I used to work on behalf of youth at risk and multicultural youth. In a diverse community like Windsor, we still sadly experience some anti-Semitism. Sadly enough, there are still elements of our society who are anti-Semitic.

I thank the member for his contributions. The bill could be very successful in providing knowledge to people about anti-Semitism in our communities all across Canada.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his reflection on these issues. It is true, education is one of the most important elements of this proposed Canadian Jewish heritage month. It would provide an opportunity for communities across this country to reflect on the importance of and to reflect on the lessons from the Jewish community.

As I said in my speech, we cannot hide from anti-Semitism. It is there. Sadly, many of those who survived the worst, the Holocaust survivors that came to Canada, are dwindling in numbers, which makes it ever more important that we continue to teach, and that we continue to pass on the lessons of those survivors to our young Canadians to make sure they understand that hate and prejudice against Jews and against any minority is completely unacceptable. This month will certainly be a platform to make sure that happens across the country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to let my friend know that I am pleased to see this piece of legislation come forward. I hope it will have, and I believe it will have, unanimous support in this place.

I was trying to search my archives to see if I could find proof of this, but I know that the synagogue at Whitney Pier near Sydney, Nova Scotia, is one of the oldest in Canada, if not the oldest. We have rich traditions, and a societal contribution that is absolutely disproportionate to the number of people within the Jewish community. It is experienced right across Canada.

I want to add that to my colleague's list of communities where the roots go deep, to around 1890. It is well over 100 years that there has been a synagogue and an active community in industrial Cape Breton where I used to live, and certainly on southern Vancouver Island where I live now.

Mr. Michael Levitt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for highlighting yet another small community in Canada that has a rich Jewish tradition and legacy. That speaks to the heart of this legislation.

This legislation, which is proposing a Jewish heritage month across Canada, would give voice to all of the small communities that have rich traditions of Jewish activism, Jewish community leaders or businesses, or restaurants. It will give them a platform on which to be heard. We hear the stories from the major centres of Jewish life in Canada, but there are so many more that are untold. This legislation will provide an opportunity for communities across the country to be heard, and to add to the importance of Jewish heritage in Canada.

• (1750)

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in the House today regarding Bill S-232. I would like to commend my colleague from the other place, Senator Linda Frum, for her work on this, as well as my colleague across the way, the hon. member for York Centre.

In 1939, the MS *St. Louis* departed from Hamburg, Germany, with 937 passengers on board, most of whom were Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi regime. The *St. Louis* set sail for Cuba, but upon arrival in Havana, these refugees were denied entry. Not to be deterred, Captain Gustav Schröder changed course for Florida, hoping to find refuge for his passengers in the United States, but it was not to be found.

Private Members' Business

The inaction of the Americans prompted a courageous group of Canadian clergy and academics to urge the Canadian government to offer safe passage to the *St. Louis*. After all, Canada was just a two-day journey from the Florida coast. However, William Lyon Mackenzie King allowed himself to be persuaded by one high-level, anti-Semitic bureaucrat, rather than the voices of the Canadian people. To our great shame, the ship was turned away, fanning the flames of the insanity of Adolf Hitler, who rationalized that if the rest of the world did not want to help the Jews, then it was up to him to solve his so-called insane Jewish problem.

In the end, some of those refugees were granted permission to board vessels travelling to the United Kingdom. The remaining 620 refugees remained aboard the *St. Louis* and were carried to mainland Europe. Researchers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum did a historical trace on the fate of each passenger. In a summary of its findings, it stated:

Of the 620 *St. Louis* passengers who returned to continental Europe, we determined that ...254 passengers in Belgium, France and the Netherlands after that date died during the Holocaust. Most of these people were murdered in the killing centers of Auschwitz and Sobibor; the rest died in internment camps, in hiding, or attempting to evade the Nazis.

I remind the House of this blemish in our history to highlight how far we have come as a nation in our relationship with the Jewish people. Canada has long abandoned its anti-Semitic immigration policies of the Second World War. Today, Canada is home to some 400,000 Jewish people, the fourth largest Jewish population in the world. Only Israel, the United States, and France have larger populations. Canada has indeed come a long way.

Tonight, we are deliberating on Bill S-232, a bill that enjoys multi-party support, whereby the month of May, in each and every year, would be designated Canadian Jewish heritage month. When this legislation reaches royal assent, Canadians will have much to celebrate in May 2018.

The contribution Jewish people have made to Canadian culture is profoundly broad. The fingerprints of the Jewish community can be found in nearly every aspect of Canadian life. I could not possibly articulate in the time provided the innumerable accomplishments and contributions the Jewish community has made to the fabric of Canadian culture, but consider this as a sampling.

In business, Jewish Canadians have proven to be more than capable job creators. Shoppers Drug Mart, Reitmans clothing, Calgary's Smithbilt Hats, ALDO shoe company, Sony stores, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, and the First City Financial Corporation were all founded by Canadians of Jewish heritage.

In arts and entertainment, Canada has been fortunate to have so many talented artists and performers of Jewish heritage. To name a few: actor William Shatner, most famous for his role in *Star Trek*; Lorne Greene of *Bonanza*; the game show host Howie Mandel, of *Deal or No Deal*; Monty Hall of *Let's Make A Deal*; Lorne Michaels, who created *Saturday Night Live*; and the Mirvish family and John Hirsch, giants in live theatre production. I wish I could name Henry Winkler, but unfortunately, he is not Canadian, but I just love the Fonz so much.

In literature, we have been blessed by the words of novelist Mordecai Richler, playwright Ted Allan, and poets Leonard Cohen, Irving Layton, and A.M. Klein.

Musical talents include composers Louis Applebaum and Srul Glick; opera singer Pauline Donalda; singer-songwriter Corey Hart; Steven Page, former lead singer of the Barenaked Ladies; and Geddy Lee, lead vocalist of the rock band Rush. Of course, we cannot forget about world-renowned rapper Drake.

● (1755)

In medicine and science, the late Dr. Mark Wainberg and Dr. Éric A. Cohen have been regarded as pre-eminent HIV-AIDS researchers. Victoria Kaspi is a well-known physicist in the field of astrophysics, and Rudolph Arthur Marcus received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work on the theory of electron transfer reactions in chemical systems.

In law, five justices of Jewish heritage have served on the bench of the Supreme Court.

In politics, my friend and former colleague on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, the hon. Irwin Cotler, who my colleague mentioned earlier, served as a federal justice minister and has risen to the defence of prisoners of conscience around the world, including Nelson Mandela. Today, at the age of 77, he continues to raise concerns about the fivefold threat presented by Iran and provides legal defence to Leopoldo Lopez, the opposition political leader in Venezuela. The last federal finance minister to table a balanced budget was yet another Jewish Canadian, the hon. Joe Oliver.

The Jewish community in Canada and all Canadians can be proud of all these accomplishments, and a whole lot more. On a personal note, since first being elected to this House more than 11 years ago, I have had the distinct privilege of having a front row seat in a vibrant and active Jewish community in Hamilton. For instance, Madeleine Levy has been a fierce advocate in our community and schools, educating students on the Holocaust and teaching tolerance and acceptance.

Rabbi Baskin is a thoughtful and accomplished author and a key donor to McMaster University library, having donated 1,000 books and manuscripts and 200 pieces of art, as well.

Rabbi Daniel Green oversees Adas Israel and the Hamilton Hebrew Academy and acts as the wise father figure to the broader Jewish community. Dr. Larry Levin is the president of the Canadian Dental Association, having previously served in the same role at the provincial level. Dr. Lorne Finkelstein has made extraordinary efforts to fight racism in Hamilton, to advocate for patients, and to save young lives internationally.

Arthur Weisz, a holocaust survivor, founded the successful property management company Effort Trust. Though Arthur passed away in 2013, his legacy of successful business is being carried on by his son, Tom, who generously donates his own money while raising funds for many worthy causes at home and in Israel, including the Jewish National Fund.

Private Members' Business

Knowing first-hand the contributions of the Jewish community in Hamilton and across the country, it was easy to support a proposed project driven by Tova and Jim Lynch called the Canadian Jewish Experience. This project has officially become part of the Canada 150 celebrations. It highlights many of the accomplishments I mentioned, and many more. I encourage members of this House and Canadians visiting Ottawa for the sesquicentennial celebrations to stop by the exhibit.

With a view of history, all Canadians should be proud that Jewish people have been able to come to our nation and thrive, yet we have a long way to go. Bill S-232 is before Parliament against the backdrop of rising anti-Semitism, both in Canada and abroad. B'nai Brith has issued a report that shows that anti-Semitic events in Canada last year were the highest on record. As my colleague has said, this is unacceptable.

The adoption of this legislation will send the message to all Canadians that we are committed to a diverse, multicultural, and tolerant society, where Canadians, regardless of ethnicity or religion, are able to thrive. As I have said many times, Canada is a place where members of one faith can live peaceably beside members of other faiths and where members of one race can live peaceably beside members of other races.

With that in mind, I would like to return to the story of the MS *St. Louis*. In 2011, the Conservative government supported the efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress to create a memorial called the Wheel of Conscience. This monument was installed at Pier 21 in Halifax to remind Canadians of the underlying attitudes that led to the *St. Louis* being turned away.

The memorial is a polished stainless steel wheel that incorporates four intermeshing gears, each showing a word to represent factors of exclusion: anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism, and hatred. Inscribed on the back of the wheel is the passenger list, including the names of those who died at the hands of the Nazis.

Let that monument be a reminder of how far we have come. Truly, as a country, we have gone from darkness to light. Let us continue to build on that success and support Bill S-232. May God bless you, Mr. Speaker, may God bless our Jewish community, and may God bless Canada.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and the honour to rise today in the House to speak to Bill S-232. If it passes, as I think it will, it will declare the month of May as Canadian Jewish Heritage Month. This is a very important bill.

New Democrats strongly support multiculturalism and Canada's unparalleled celebration of heritage, as well as the contributions of all the various ethnic and religious groups. Today, many cities and towns across the country have significant Jewish-Canadian communities that celebrate their culture and history. Consequently, the NDP supports granting this heritage and the events taking place every May all the national recognition they deserve. Canada's rich cultural mosaic is one of the assets that make Canada what it is today, constituting a great strength that it should be very proud of.

According to the 2011 census, nearly 310,000 Canadians from coast to coast have identified themselves as having full or partial Jewish ancestry. The largest groups live in and around Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Winnipeg. Jewish people have lived in Canada for over 250 years. The first recorded Jewish newcomer settled in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, in 1760. Many Jewish immigrants came to Canada between 1880 and 1920, arriving mostly from eastern European countries such as Romania, Poland, and Lithuania.

Immigration restrictions imposed after 1924 made it difficult for Jewish people to come to Canada, unfortunately. This situation persisted until after the Second World War. Tragically, few Jewish people were admitted to Canada during the Holocaust because of the immigration policies in place at that time. Since then, Jewish immigration to Canada has been largely tied to political conditions in their home countries.

For example, there was the arrival of Hungarian Jews and Jewish refugees from Egypt and Iraq in the 1950s, Romanian Jews in the 1960s, Jews from the Soviet Union in the 1970s, and North African Jews in the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, the Jewish-Canadian community and the culture itself are incredibly diverse across communities.

In 2006, the United States proclaimed the month of May as a designated time to celebrate the contributions of the American Jewish community. In 2012, Ontario declared May as Jewish heritage month. May is also the month that Israel celebrates Israeli Independence Day.

Since we are celebrating Jewish heritage, I would like to mark the occasion by recognizing the contributions of three important Jewish Canadians. Let us begin with the artistic, musical, and poetic spheres. Leonard Cohen was born in Westmount, Quebec, on September 21, 1934, into a family of Russian and Polish heritage that was part of Montreal's Jewish community.

In adolescence, Leonard Cohen developed a keen interest in writing, especially poetry. It was also during this critical time that the young emerging artist first learned the basics of guitar. While he was studying at McGill University, Leonard Cohen met the poet and English professor Louis Dudek, who in 1956 helped him publish his very first collection of poetry, *Let Us Compare Mythologies*.

● (1805)

Leonard Cohen found tremendous success in the 1970s. In 1977, he released *Death of a Ladies' Man*, an album produced by Phil Spector with contributions from Bob Dylan and Allen Ginsberg. Musically, his 1984 album *Various Positions* was a major turning point in this Montreal icon's career. It includes several of his best-known songs, such as *Hallelujah* and *Dance Me to the End of Love*.

Leonard Cohen received numerous awards and honours throughout his prolific career. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1991 before being named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2003.

Private Members' Business

Léa Roback is another important figure in Canada's heritage. She was born in Montreal on November 3, 1903. She grew up in Beauport, near Quebec City, where her parents owned a general store. She spoke Yiddish at home and English and French outside. Being trilingual meant that she could switch freely between languages.

Léa Roback's family returned to Montreal when she was 14. Two years later, Ms. Roback began working in a factory, where she became aware of the inequality between Montreal's wealthy anglophone families and the mostly francophone and Jewish working class.

In 1936, Thérèse Casgrain, another great Canadian feminist legendary for her work fighting for women's suffrage and for founding the Voice of Women movement, asked Léa Roback to join in her fight. At that time, Ms. Roback was active in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, which led the struggle to improve working conditions in that industry.

Ms. Roback was a social justice and human rights advocate for much of her life. Ahead of her time, she was renowned for her progressive work firmly rooted in solidarity. She was involved in numerous Montreal organizations, including Quebec Aid for the Partially Sighted and other humanitarian and feminist groups.

In 1991, Ms. Roback's eventful life was featured in a documentary by Sophie Bissonnette entitled *Des lumières dans la grande noirceur —A vision in the darkness* in English—with Les Productions Contre-Jour. Her interviews with Madeleine Parent were published by Nicole Lacelle with Les Éditions du remue-ménage in 1988.

She is another great Jewish Canadian who has shaped our heritage.

In closing, I would like to mention a major Jewish figure who has made his mark on Canadian economic history. Sam Steinberg was a Hungarian-born Canadian businessman and philanthropist. His determination and vision turned his mother's tiny grocery store into Steinberg's supermarkets, at one time the largest grocery chain in Quebec. Sam Steinberg not only became a giant in his field, he was also the head of Ivanhoe and Pharmaprix. In 1974, the National Film Board even made a documentary about him entitled *After Mr. Sam*.

At one time, the chain was so popular that when Quebecers went grocery shopping they would say that they were going to do their "steinberg". Even though they may not necessarily have been going to a Steinberg store, the expression was rooted into Quebec consciousness.

Sam Steinberg and his wife Helen Roth were great philanthropists. They contributed to a host of charitable causes, including the construction of the Judaism Pavilion at Expo 67, the Helen and Sam Steinberg Foundation's Geriatric Day Hospital, and the Sam Steinberg Award for Young Jewish Entrepreneur of the Year, given by the Jewish Chamber of Commerce of Montreal.

This shows how many great Canadians have made their mark on the history of Jewish heritage. That is why I am happy to support this bill that seeks to have the month of May henceforth known as Jewish Heritage Month across Canada.

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak to Bill S-232, recognizing the month of May each year as Canadian Jewish heritage month.

I will be very brief in my remarks as I know that many of my colleagues wish to speak on this bill, and my role here today is to simply put the government's position on the record.

[Translation]

I would first like to thank the member for York Centre for sponsoring this bill in the House of Commons. I also thank him for his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

Our government supports this bill since it gives Canadians the opportunity to reflect on and to recognize the many contributions of Canada's Jewish community and the important role it plays across Canada.

[English]

Canadian Jewish heritage month will provide an important opportunity for all Canadians to reflect on the many and varied contributions of Jewish Canadians to the fabric of our country, and it will allow for people to share in and learn about their culture.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our government's support of this bill, and I hope that all members of this House will offer their support to this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to speak in support of Bill S-232, a bill that would establish Jewish heritage month here in Canada.

As is always the case with these heritage month proposals, there is far more to be said than can be covered in 10 minutes, but that is especially true, given the length and breadth of Jewish history. Jews are one of the oldest people groups with a relatively continuous identity.

The impact of Jews on the world is, I think, most evident in what we call the Abrahamic faiths. The world's major Abrahamic faiths, which all come from a Jewish root, claim a majority of the world's population as adherents, and in many of these cases seeking a deeper understanding of faith leads individual adherents to actually seek a deeper understanding of that faith's Jewish roots.

Sometimes we speak of faith or religion as if it were a distinct and separate domain of activity, but the reality is that religion is often very much intertwined with other aspects of life. Through the spread of all of the Abrahamic faiths, Jewish cultural, social, and political ideas have also been spread throughout the world. Jewish ideas are at the root of many if not most modern polities and cultures.

Jewish religious theologizing puts its particular emphasis on reason, logic, and debate. The Jewish intellectual tradition, through Jewish religion but also quite directly, clearly infuses all aspects of western religious and intellectual life.

Of course, much can be said about the contributions that Jews have made to the full range of domains of life, natural and social sciences and the arts, as well as the other domains mentioned.

Recognizing the breadth of Jewish history and the impact across cultures and domains, I would like to focus the lion's share of my remarks today on 20th-century Jewish history and the history of my own family.

When I was in Israel last year, as we approached the Holocaust museum, our tour guide told us that Jews are a post-traumatic people. The Jewish community as a whole and individual communities and families in particular live in the shadow of a terrible genocide, the Shoah, in which six million European Jews were killed. That overall number is important, but it is not just a number, it is a collection of individual stories and experiences, experiences of horrors that are unimaginable to many of us.

As most members here know, my grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. She grew up in the Munster area of Germany. She had a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. She was never caught by the Nazis. She hid out on farms, away from her family. After the war, she caught up with her father in South America.

My grandmother rarely spoke directly about the horrors she experienced. This is likely typical of many victims of this sort of trauma, but I think it also reflected the mentality of her generation, a generation that was every bit as hopeful and idealistic as my own, but also that did not put a major emphasis on sharing their own experiences. In some ways they were too busy building the future to tell stories about their past. My grandparents would tell us certain things about their lives that they thought would be useful or helpful, and they would not tell us things that they thought were not useful or helpful. They did not feel a need to be known or understood.

Still, some stories came out in different ways. After my grandmother died, my uncle shared a story about a time when, as a child, he and a number of other boys in the neighbourhood were wrestling. He said to the other boy in the offhanded and unserious way that children sometimes do, "I'm going to bash your face in." My grandmother apparently froze and grabbed him. "Don't ever say that again", she said, "I saw a man bash another man's face in."

Last week I spoke at a film screening here on the Hill about the use of rape as a weapon of war. The Nazis created forced brothels during the war, 10 at concentration camps between 1942 and 1945. There was a concern that because of my grandmother's age and complexion, if she were picked up, she would be sent to one of these brothels. Her mother prepared her for that possibility by laying out how she could maximize her chances of survival. Can members think of something so terrible, a mother trying to prepare her young teenage daughter for how to survive the possibility of sexual slavery?

Many Holocaust survivors were reluctant to share their stories, but remembering them and telling their stories is important for a proper understanding of the past and for all of us as we think about how we build a better future. I salute all of those, including my grandmother, who had the courage to share their stories, even in limited or private ways.

Private Members' Business

What does it mean to say that European Jews and perhaps in some sense all Jews are a post-traumatic people? Living in the shadow of such a terrible event has psychological impacts on victims and on their descendants. It also leaves people with a deeper appreciation of the reality of evil and the need for a strong and consistent response to it.

● (1815)

The descendants of Holocaust survivors are often called second-, third-, or fourth-generation Holocaust survivors themselves, and more is starting to be written and studied about the impacts of these events generations later. In this vein, I would like to quote from a 2015 article in *The Guardian*, which states:

Trauma research about the impact of the Holocaust on subsequent generations varies; some studies conclude there is no effect of trauma two generations on, while others claim that breast milk of survivors was affected by stress hormones that impacted on the physiology of the next generation. Some in the field of epigenetics say the intergenerational effects of the Holocaust are very pronounced and that the atrocities altered the DNA of victims' descendants, so that they have different stress hormone profiles to their peers.

Psychologist Ruth Barnett, whose Jewish father fled Germany for Shanghai, narrowly escaping the Holocaust, says she has witnessed inherited trauma in some of her clients.

"Constantly talking about events like the gas chambers to grandchildren is a way that traumatized people try to get rid of it... But unless it is processed properly, they make even more anxiety for themselves and other generations."

My grandmother died of cancer about 10 years ago. As Holocaust survivors die, it is important to remember that the impact of the Holocaust remains, and we must remember these events and ensure that they never happen again.

As I said, these events have left many in the Jewish community with a deeper appreciation of the reality of evil and the need for a strong and consistent response to it. While fighting for the rights of Jews throughout the world, Jewish people and organizations have been and continue to be at the forefront of the fight for the rights and dignity of all people. One prominent example of this is Canada's Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, or CIJA, which actively encourages its members to be involved in the fight for international human rights and which assists other ethnocultural communities involved in human rights advocacy.

As a Christian myself, I would like to particularly note the advocacy of CIJA for Christians facing persecution around the world. Its website notes, "Experts say Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world. CIJA and Rabbis across the country are calling on Canada to take decisive action to help Christians in the Middle East and Africa." This is notable, in part, because many past acts of anti-Semitism were committed by those claiming, falsely, in my judgment, but claiming nonetheless, to be motivated by their Christian faith. The present eagerness of the Jewish community here and elsewhere to advocate for the Christian community in spite of that history is a great testament to the commitment of this community to standing up for universal human rights.

Private Members' Business

I would add, parenthetically, that it is high time we heed CIJA's call and finally take action on these issues. Today, many countries in the Middle East, which had long-standing Christian and Jewish communities, have lost their Jewish communities and are now rapidly losing their Christian communities. A strong presence in Asia and Africa are also part of Jewish heritage, but many of those communities have now disappeared.

Of course, a key part of the Jewish story in the 20th and 21st centuries was the creation and continuing vibrancy of the Jewish state of Israel. In the state of Israel as well, we see the impact of the Holocaust. Because of the experience of the Holocaust, Israelis will wisely never give up the means to protect themselves. Israel will always choose survival over popularity, and it would be mad to do otherwise, but Israel has not just survived, it has thrived. It has prospered, inspired the world, and has provided safe harbour for Jews, but also for Bahá'is and other persecuted communities who cannot safely live anywhere else. It has protected the fundamental rights and dignity of all its people.

Resilience shines brightly through Jewish heritage. There have been successive attempts at extermination, and yet these people now survive and thrive, and continue to give their rich gifts to the world. May God continue to bless Israel and the Jewish people.

● (1820)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and pleasure to rise today to speak in favour of Bill S-232.

Do hon. members know who invented the telephone? I am sure that most of them do. It was Alexander Graham Bell. However, do they know who made the telephone a workable invention? I am not sure that they do. It was a Jewish Canadian named Emile Berliner, who not only made the telephone workable, but also the microphone and created the first gramophone.

How many members know who the first Canadian world figure skating champion was? In 1891, a Montrealer named Louis Rubenstein travelled to St. Petersburg to compete in the first unofficial world figure skating championship. Instead of welcoming him, Mr. Rubenstein was put in prison by the Russians because he was a Jew, but because he carried a letter from his friend, Governor General Lord Stanley, demanding his safe conduct, the British ambassador intervened, he was allowed to compete, and he won the world championship. He returned to Montreal and created the Amateur Skating Association of Canada. He served out the rest of his life as a city councillor in the city of Montreal. These are but two examples of Jewish Canadians who, for the last 280 years, have contributed to the vibrancy of this country and this continent.

Before talking about what Jews have given Canada, I want to talk about what Canada has given Jews.

[*Translation*]

As a Jewish Canadian, I cannot begin to express how proud I am that Canada is my country, that Quebec is my province, and that I am a Montrealer.

[*English*]

All three of these identities are interchangeable. All three of these identities have led me and generations of my family before me to prosper.

Jews come from a history of persecution across the world, whether in Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East. Country after country has expelled Jews, has caused them to be ghettoized, and has made them wear symbols to show that they are different. However, our experience in North America, in Canada and the United States, where we arrived as equals, where we arrived and were welcomed, where we arrived and there was freedom of religion, has made Canada what my ancestors called the *goldene medina*, which means the golden state. That was the United States and Canada. That is why generation after generation of Jews fleeing persecution in the 19th century and 20th century came here, to create our community of more than 400,000 Jewish Canadians who call Canada home today.

I thank Canada for what it has done for me and my community. The reason we love this country and are so patriotic is that it gave us opportunities no other country ever did. Therefore, Jewish Canadian heritage month would not only celebrate the contributions of Jewish Canadians, but for Jewish Canadians it would also celebrate the country that gave us such enormous opportunity.

Contrary to what many people believe, Jewish Canadians were among the earliest immigrants to this country after our indigenous peoples. Even in the history of New France, there were Jews who came here. There was a story of Esther Brandeau who came here dressed as a man and eventually was expelled back to France because she refused to convert to Catholicism, and New France was closed to people who were not Catholic.

Jews were always part of the landscape. In 1740, a gentleman named George Hart settled in Montreal, coming from New England. He was the first Jew to settle in Quebec, not Aaron Hart, who arrived in 1760 with the British army. Quebec, Lower Canada, was the first jurisdiction in the world to grant Jews full political and civil rights in 1832, under the stewardship of Louis-Joseph Papineau.

The Jewish community contributed a great deal to the early days in my city of Montreal. David David was one of the first governors of the Bank of Montreal and sat on the first board. A gentleman named Jesse Joseph was the president of the first Montreal Gas Company, which later became known as the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company, and he created the Montreal Telegraph Company. Moses Hayes was the chief of police in Montreal in the 1850s and 1860s.

In 1871, Henry Nathan of Victoria became the first Jewish Canadian elected to the House of Commons. Jewish Canadians have served with honour in all three political parties over that time. David Barrett was a Jewish New Democrat and premier of British Columbia. Mr. Marshall was a Jewish premier of Newfoundland from the Conservative Party. There has been generation after generation of Jews in all three political parties in this country, including the Liberal Party, people like David Croll and Irwin Cotler. Even today, in my native area of Montreal, we have produced senators Judith Seidman and Marc Gold. We have produced Irwin Cotler, Lawrence Bergman, and David Birnbaum, who served in the House of Commons and the national assembly. Mitchell Brownstein, Bill Steinberg, Russell Copeman have been mayors. Marvin Rotrand was a city councillor. The list goes on. We have been part of the discussion and of the lexicon in this country.

Jews have served honourably in our armed forces since the War of 1812.

• (1825)

[Translation]

The Jewish people served during the Patriotes' Rebellion in 1837. During the First World War, more than 4,000 Jews served in the Canadian Armed Forces, and during the Second World War, more than 20,000 proudly served their country.

[English]

During that period of time we have created institutions that have served not only our community but all Canadians well.

It is interesting that people see Jewish Canadians as having only been from the big cities. They see us in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary. However, the first Jewish Canadian wave of immigration was the Sephardic wave in the 1760s, and after that waves of Jews came from Europe and settled small town Canada, creating farming settlements in Saskatchewan and Alberta, like Edenbridge and Wapella, creating corner stores and peddling operations in places like Glace Bay and Yarmouth, in Nova Scotia.

Throughout this country, Jewish Canadians have integrated into their communities and worked alongside their Christian brothers and sisters and later arrivals from other religions to build this country.

In Montreal, many of our institutions, not only Jewish institutions but wider institutions, were created by families like the Bronfmans, the Kolbers, the Reitmans, the Vinebergs, the Segals, the Adams, the Azrielies, the Goodmans, the Bissells, the Martzes, the Goldblooms, the Pascals, the Gewurtzes, the Weiners, the Steinbergs, the Garbers, the Cummings, the Papermans, and the Blacks.

[Translation]

We were joined by a vibrant community that arrived from the Arab countries, a community that endured anti-Semitism after the Second World War. This community settled in Canada, particularly in Quebec and in Montreal. Not only did this community find peace, but it also gave rise to very strong community leaders. They built institutions, not only for the Jewish community, but for all Quebecers and all Canadians. These are people such as Emile and Aline Malka, Moise Ohana, Sylvain Abitbol, Geneviève Busbib,

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Marc Kakon, Laurent Amram, Henri and Edmond Elbaz, Betty Elkaim, Jo and Dolly Gabay, Jacques Golbert, Haim Abenheim, Sidney Elhadad, and many more. There are so many.

[English]

This is the 100th anniversary of Federation CJA, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and Federation CJA in Montreal. Federation is our prime organization that gathers all the other Jewish organizations.

I would be remiss if I did not also recognize those community leaders who built our national and Montreal-based organizations, people like Dorothy Reitman, Sheila Kussner, Barbara Seal, Lillian Vineberg, Nancy Rosenfeld, David Cape, Goldie and Shelly Hershon, Susan Laxer, Evan Feldman, David Amiel, Jack and Pascale Hasen, Deborah Corber, Reuben Poupko, Dean Mendel, Gail and Heather Adelson, Karen Laxer, Joel Shalit, Stanley Plotnick, Mark Merson, Sidney Margles, Eta Yudin, Eddy Wiltzer, Gary Shapiro, Monica Bensoussan, and of course the great rabi of Shaar Hashomayim who still serves at age 96, Wilfred Shuchat. In calling all these individual Jews, I want to remind everyone that each of them have made contributions, but the community has made contributions.

I hope in Canadian Jewish heritage month, all Canadians will take the time to learn about their local Jewish communities. In that way, we will be able to fight and eradicate the anti-Semitism that exists. Once we know our neighbours, we are much less prejudiced against them.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

INDIAN ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Indian Act (elimination of sex-based inequities in registration), as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try to be as thorough as possible in my remaining three minutes.

To me, Bill S-3 is the best example of a bill indigenous people should have been part of when drafting. If the government had spent some time consulting Stéphane Descheneaux and others, while spending less time repeating talking points, it could have fixed this mess months and months ago. Instead, the government waited until it received an extension to its court mandate deadline to get to work.

The department did much better this time around. It spent less time talking about what it was going to do and more time listening. Many indigenous groups were happy to show all the problems with Bill S-3 and how it can be fixed.

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While Bill S-3 can no longer claim to fix all gender-based discrimination when amended, it is a good starting point for phase two.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up a theme that was advanced by one of the Conservative colleagues, noting the very same amendment the Senate inserted into this bill and then the Liberal members of committee withdrew, “6(1)(a) all the way”, as the women’s indigenous organizations are saying.

This is how it is described in a press release from the Abenaki Nation on June 18:

The clause added to Bill S-3 by the Senate was identical to a clause that the Liberal opposition had added to the Harper government’s Bill C-3 in 2010, but that then-House Speaker [Conservative Speaker]...ruled was out of order for going beyond the scope of the bill.

Now that the House Committee has changed the name of Bill S-3 on June 16th, the [Liberal]...government and Justice Minister...have followed the Harper government’s example and effectively announced they will not address sex discrimination in the Indian Act that goes beyond the specific circumstances of...Descheneaux and co-plaintiffs....

I am interested in my colleague’s observations on why what the Liberals proposed during the Harper government could not now be embraced by the Liberals now that they are in power.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Mr. Speaker, obviously we have to move forward. Unfortunately, the court decision had a mandated time period in which we had to address the issues.

Human rights should not be a topic where we have to extend debate. It should be automatic. Unfortunately, we cannot change yesterday, but we can change tomorrow. Moving forward, we understand that phase two is supposed address all sexual discrimination for indigenous people.

I am looking forward to phase two. It is important that there be continued progress with Bill S-3 and phase two.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since its inception, the Indian Act has accorded privilege to male Indians and their descendants and disregarded female Indians as second class. While piecemeal changes to this discriminatory act have been made over time, there is still a sex-based hierarchy of the status categories.

To sum up where we are right now, despite unprecedented government promises of indigenous reconciliation and respect, Liberals are trading off human rights based on budget lines. Indigenous women, who have been fighting 40 years in court for equality, watched in dismay last week as Liberals gutted reforms that would have made the Indian Act less vile. Canada’s laws still say that indigenous people with a university degree, with military service, or with a white husband lose their Indian status. Would one not think that a government pledged to a new nation-to-nation relationship built on respect would want to fix this?

Indigenous women who lost their legal status after marrying white men convinced the Senate this month to adopt Indian Act changes to overturn these long-standing injustices. However, last week Liberal MPs stripped those changes out after the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs threatened “dire unintended consequences” from what looks to me like a fundamental human right. Is there any other

group in Canada the government would discriminate against in this way?

“[I]ndigenous women deserve the equality the charter is intended to ensure and protect”, so said litigant Lynn Gehl in Ottawa this month at a press conference.

Courts ordered that the government end discrimination in the Indian Act once and for all. This bill, gutted by Liberal MPs last week, could have done that.

To honour National Aboriginal Day tomorrow and to validate the Prime Minister’s feminist rhetoric, the Prime Minister should do the right thing in this week’s vote, maybe even in tonight’s vote, and that would be to adopt the amendments proposed by my colleague in the New Democrat caucus and by the Green Party leader to restore the elements of the Senate bill that were cut by Liberal MPs at committee last week. Let us end this session of Parliament on a just note and send Canada on a good path for its 150th.

There is much support for the government ending sex discrimination in the Indian Act. Canada has endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which clarifies state obligations to respect self-determination, including the right to determine membership. Canada must get out of the business of deciding who is and is not an Indian under Canadian law.

The United Nations commission to end discrimination against women, just in November, called out the government for the need to act on this file. It said:

...the Committee remains concerned about continued discrimination against indigenous women, in particular regarding the transmission of Indian status, preventing them and their descendants from enjoying all the benefits relating to such status.

The Committee recommends that the State party remove all remaining discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act that affect indigenous women and their descendants, and ensure that indigenous women enjoy the same rights as men to transmit their status to their children and grandchildren.

The government has failed. It has given this House a flawed bill, uninformed by any indigenous woman’s input. After 40 years of litigation by indigenous women, many of whom are still alive, and indigenous lawyers who have been fighting alongside them, the government failed to ask them what they thought and have them inform this vital legislation before us.

The government has stalled for 18 months, knowing that it had a court-ordered requirement to do this work. It is scrambling at the end of this session to meet that court deadline. Having been given 18 months by the court to make this right, they had testimony from witnesses that could have made it right. The Liberals are now asking Parliament to pass a bill that is being heavily criticized by the majority of indigenous people.

● (1835)

I will quote from the Ontario Native Women’s Association. It said,

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By rejecting the “6(1)(a) All The Way” amendment to Bill S-3 the federal government has betrayed its promise to Indigenous women. The amendment would have reinstated our sisters and removed all sex based discrimination from the Indian Act.

The Senate did repair that flaw. The Senate amendment, which came to this House, has support from indigenous women. That repaired bill, given to the government, was really a gift to a government that is struggling to deliver on its first nations promises.

On the eve of National Aboriginal Day and the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation, this would have been a real gift to the country to actually move forward and end gender discrimination under the Indian Act. Instead, the Liberal members of the committee gutted the bill, bringing us back to what we are debating today. It could be repaired by accepting the amendments that are on the floor right now.

This has left indigenous women out again. There is strong criticism, repeated again and again, by almost every indigenous women's organization we have heard from.

This has left us, then, scrambling in the final days of Parliament, disrespecting the advice of indigenous women and disrespecting Canada's deep need for reconciliation. This is breaking trust. It is a dangerous game. We have cynicism from the women most affected, and their children, when we have the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs saying that there will be “dire unanticipated consequences” of this bill. Indigenous women say repeatedly that this is a human right, that gender equality is a human right already and that we do not need to consult on it.

This is a government that consults on everything, endlessly, things we did not think needed to be consulted on, such as restoring habitat protection to the Fisheries Act. In that case, we are consulted in the absence of action.

In this case, we have the government's failure to consult with the indigenous women most deeply affected. It brought a bill twice to the Senate on which there was no consultation, and now it is saying that we can only bring a half-measure bill, because we have to consult with indigenous people on the unintended and dire consequences the minister cites.

The government cannot have it both ways, not without breaking a great deal of goodwill and breaking a great deal of faith with indigenous women in this country.

As Sharon McIvor, litigant and now defence lawyer, asked at a press conference last week, why would they consult on whether they can continue to be discriminated against? Lynn Gehl, also a long-time challenger of this discrimination in court, said that the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs is using consultation as a weapon. That is no way to move forward.

We have strong indigenous women leading in this country already. I want to pay my respects to Shania Pruden, from the Pinaymootang First Nation in Manitoba, and Teanna Ducharme, whose Nisga'a name is Aygadim Majagalee. Both of these young women, in association with the Daughters of the Vote program, came to this House and testified at the status of women committee. They are articulate, strong, brilliant leaders.

I also want to honour the late Shannen Koostachin, who initiated Shannen's dream and was at the root of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal challenge on equality of treatment in child welfare. There are three rulings now the Canadian government has not honoured.

There is also Helen Knott, Treaty 8 leader, who is advocating and saying strongly that violence against the land is the same as violence against women. We need to move forward in a good way.

I ask the government to please either adopt the Senate amendments or ask the court for an extension so that it can really do this right. We cannot afford half measures in this country. Gender equality and first nations respect is a solemn promise of the government that I am going to keep working to have it keep.

● (1840)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the judge rejected the plaintiff's application for a further extension. The member is aware of that. More than 35,000 people have been waiting two years since this court decision was exercised to exercise their rights. She understands that we need to pass this legislation immediately to address the discriminatory gender-based gaps that exist in the Indian Act. We have also committed to stage two.

Will the member support those people who have been waiting for the past two years and support the second stage so we can do the consultations properly and get the real changes that are necessary in the bill?

● (1845)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal government was in opposition, it proposed the very same amendment to the Conservative government that, now that it is the government, it rejects. This has been on the Liberal Party's agenda and radar for a very long time. When they formed government, they would have been briefed on this. They have had 18 months to ask indigenous women whether the new legislation proposed in S-3 was adequate. Twice, the Senate told the government it was, because the Senate actually talked to indigenous women when the government failed to.

The message we are getting loud and clear from every native women's organization is that they want the Senate version of the bill passed. It is the perfect undertaking. That is what we are urging this government to do now. If the Liberals really are so surprised about the same amendment they proposed in 2010, and that the Minister of Justice advanced when she was an elected chief at the highest levels in British Columbia, imploring this Parliament to take the very same action she now opposes, which is stunning to me, then the government should ask for an extension, because it did not. In fact, the court ruling this morning said that the judge was unwilling to get in a battle between the Senate and Parliament unless the government itself was going to invite it in and leave the door open. The government has failed to ask for that extension. It has no credibility.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for her passionate advocacy on behalf of indigenous women in this context.

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I was disappointed to hear her say that the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs has claimed “dire unintended consequences”. I would like her to advise the House just what those consequences would be, because gender equality is a human right, as she said. One would hope that would be the number one priority. What are these dire unintended consequences? Are they real, or are they simply a smokescreen for a failure to do the right thing?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's frustration. We cannot think of another group within Canada that is discriminated against more than indigenous women. It is a double whammy in our system, which we really hoped this government was going to try to change.

No one should have to have consultation on their human rights. This is not unlike the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The government has now been issued three non-compliance orders. The courts have said that indigenous kids should get the same funding and treatment as non-indigenous kids. The government in that case said it could not afford the \$155-million tab to do that. The government is very willing to spend on all kinds of other areas, but that it is not willing to spend on human rights is inexplicable, and it has some explaining to do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have talked to representatives of the government. I very forcefully won amendments. I put forward amendments to restore the provisions that eliminate all gender discrimination. I do think, in fairness to the hon. minister, that there are issues. My view is that we can solve the issues.

There is one I will mention to the hon. member. If a whole flood of new members were accepted as legitimate members of a first nation community, they would then have voting rights. Some first nations communities have a quorum that requires 25% of all those people in the nation to vote before the election is valid.

There are ways to handle unintended consequences. Deciding to continue gender discrimination is not a way to handle an unintended consequence.

• (1850)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. The government has had years to examine these “unintended consequences”. The amendments proposed today are identical to those that the Liberals proposed while in opposition in 2010. They certainly should be aware of what the implications of their amendments were. They should stop their hypocrisy and move ahead to end gender discrimination against indigenous women.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 4. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The recorded division on Motion No. 4 stands deferred.

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to orders made on Tuesday, May 30, the divisions stand deferred until June 21, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed from April 6 consideration of Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the debate on the previous bill. It was encouraging to hear many comments recognizing the importance of June 21, which is National Aboriginal Day. This day has been celebrated for many years. It is a celebration of Canada's indigenous culture, a very unique heritage. I look forward to celebrating tomorrow. The debate we had is a step forward. National Aboriginal Day needs to be recognized.

Let me get to Bill C-25, an act that would amend the Canada Business Corporations Act. It is important we move forward with the bill. I would encourage all members of the House to support it.

When we think of the corporations, over one-quarter of a million corporations in every region of our country fall under the Canada Business Corporations Act, or the CBCA. Under that is a general framework for operations that in essence provides guidance.

Canada carries a tremendous amount of influence well beyond our borders. When we talk about that framework for businesses or corporations in general, whether they be non-profit, for profit, co-operatives, or whatever they might be, it is important we have an opportunity to not only demonstrate strong leadership in Canada but outside of Canada as well.

One of the things we really should spend time talking about, with respect to Bill C-25, is the opportunity for diversity, which is one of the biggest selling points for me. The bill recognizes the importance of annual general meetings, among other things, involving corporations. For me, the highlight is that we are demonstrating the benefits of Canada's diversity. When we talk about diversity, we talk not only about minorities but also of gender.

Over the last number of decades, virtually since the creation of legislation to provide guidance, to provide that general framework, it really has not been overly successful in ensuring diversity within those thousands of corporate boards. The legislation before us would send a strong message.

I believe that message will be well-received by all those who are responsible corporate citizens, directors on boards, and who understand the true value of diversity. We recognize that excluding individuals hurts us all. Opening doors and at the very least being aware of diversity will enhance the quality of life of all Canadians.

When I reflect on what we have accomplished over the last number of months, one of the things I am proud of is the fact that we have a Prime Minister who has demonstrated from day one how important it is to recognize diversity. All one needs to do is to take a look at the individuals who sit around the cabinet table. I would challenge anyone to mention any previous government that has seen such great diversity in cabinet, which is gender balanced.

● (1855)

The Prime Minister has been fairly well recognized as a feminist Prime Minister, not only by individuals from every region of the country but other countries abroad. When I had the opportunity to share some thoughts on the bill, the aspect that really came to mind was diversity.

In the future, the backbone of our economy will be our small businesses? The best way to advance Canada's middle class is to ensure there is a better sense of productivity, of diversity, that we all move forward together. If we are successful in doing that, we will have a healthier middle class and those aspiring to be part of it.

Today, we find more male-dominated boards, even in ethnicity and the lack of diversification. Many corporations, and do not want to use one brush with which to paint all corporations, have recognized the value of diversity and have taken it upon themselves to act on that. Those more progressive corporations that have recognized the value of this will reap the benefits in the future.

Let us bring it to this legislation. This issue of diversity is now being promoted in a very tangible way, and it has been done in

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several ways. That is why I wanted to share with members very important aspect of the legislation.

I want to highlight some of the summaries. It is important to recognize that we are reforming some aspects of the process for electing directors of certain corporations and co-operatives. That is one of the greatest appeals of diversity. We are looking at modernizing communications between corporations and/or co-operatives and their shareholders or their members. It is important to recognize that we are clarifying that corporations and co-operatives are prohibited from issuing share certificates and warrants in bearer form. It is also important to recognize that we are requiring certain corporations to place before their shareholders, at every annual meeting, information about the diversity among directors and members of senior management.

These are all very important aspects, changes that affect more than just the Canada marketplace framework or assist in that framework. They go beyond the Canada Business Corporations Act.

It is important to recognize that these amendments will help increase shareholder democracy and participation. They will also increase women's participation on corporate boards and in senior management in recognition of these changes, also allowing Canada's framework laws to better reflect modern ways of doing business.

We have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate leadership on this file, a file that touches literally well over a quarter million corporation in every region of our country. I would encourage members opposite to get behind Bill C-25. Jointly we can send a very powerful message. That message has been sent in the past, but it will be reinforced by supporting this legislation. I encourage members to vote yes.

● (1900)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, listening to the member opposite on this interjection, it is very hard to determine whether he meant to encourage us to support the bill based on what he called diversity. I was lost in the process on diversity whether it is a diversity of corporations or the diversity of business opportunities. He linked productivity to diversity. I would be very interested to know if the member opposite can advise us on the productivity level in Canada in comparison to other G7 countries, and whether he is satisfied with our productivity level or not. I would be very much interested in knowing where we stand in terms of productivity among similar countries.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, maybe I could answer the question by indicating that when we think of the number of corporations and the many different boards out there, one could argue that the more there is diversity from within the board, the more we would be able to apply widgets, products, or expertise, the many different skills we have to offer not only here in Canada but also to the world.

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That is demonstrated through the fact that we are a trading nation, and the better we will all be. When the member makes reference to productivity, there is always room for improvement, but I believe Canada and Canadians do exceptionally well. We have seen that in many different industries in Canada. For now, by supporting this legislation, we are saying we believe in more transparency and accountability at the corporate board level. We believe in diversity at the corporate board level, along with our co-operatives and non-profits.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for giving such an interesting speech

I think that our government's leitmotif is evidence-based decision-making.

My colleague raised the matter of diversity. I had the privilege of reading the study by a professor with the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. He fully demonstrated how important diversity is to the resilience and profitability of Canadian businesses. The more diversity there is, in terms of either a gender balance or having individuals from cultural communities, the more these businesses are profitable and resilient in the face of change.

I wonder if my hon. colleague could expand on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to listen to the minister responsible for the legislation when he brought it forward. He talked about the importance of innovation, and Canada's role with respect to that, and then tied in, as the member has done, the importance of diversity.

I have given many speeches not only inside the House but beyond the House, and in particular, in my home province. I talk about one of the natural assets Canada has which is its connections around the world. We are a multicultural society, second to no other. If we recognize just how enriched we are with our diversity, that enables us to break down many international barriers.

We have a strategic advantage over many other countries around the world. If we take advantage of that diversity, and see that incorporated in both private and public sectors, Canada and our middle class will do exceptionally well. When I say the middle class, it goes far beyond that. That is why I encourage members to look at the legislation, and see the bigger picture. Canada can develop strong leadership on this file.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak at report stage of Bill C-25, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act, the Canada Cooperatives Act, the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, and the Competition Act.

I will tell members that we will be supporting the bill. It is a bill that essentially came from the Conservative Party in the last Parliament.

Bill C-25 would aim to make changes to the corporate governance regime for reporting issuers incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act. The CBCA is the incorporating statute for nearly 270,000 corporations. Although most of these are small or medium-

sized and privately held, a large number of Canada's reporting issuers are also governed by the CBCA.

The proposed amendments in Bill C-25 cover several key corporate governance matters: majority voting, individual voting, annual elections, notice and access, diversity-related disclosures, and shareholder proposal filing deadlines. If enacted, these changes will affect about 600 of the approximate 1,500 companies on the TSX.

Bill C-25 is also the minister's second piece of legislation that has come straight from our previous Conservative government's 2015 budget. For those in the House not aware, I will read an excerpt from page 140 of our previous Conservative government's economic action plan 2015:

The Government will propose amendments to the CBCA to promote gender diversity among public companies, using the widely recognized "comply or explain" model...Amendments will also be proposed to modernize director election processes and communications...strengthen corporate transparency through an explicit ban on bearer instruments...amendments to related statutes governing cooperatives and not-for-profit corporations will also be introduced.

When it comes to modernizing corporate governance and reducing red tape, the previous Conservative government made massive strides. We believe in fostering an environment in which businesses could grow and contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity. I am pleased to see that the Liberals have moved forward with the comply or explain model. It has been proven that more diverse boards lead to better overall decision-making, better boards, better organization, and better economics.

However, with all the hard work our previous Conservative government did on the bill, which is still being continued by the Liberals, the Liberals want to use our past legislation and call it their own. I suppose this does free up some time, which the Prime Minister has made clear is a priority for him. Hopefully, this will allow the Liberal Party to focus on what it feels is more important to Canadians, photo ops and selfies.

Back in 2015, the Conservative Party knew that this bill needed a couple of amendments. The motion put forward by the NDP and the proposed amendments to Bill C-25 are similar to the amendments we proposed in committee, and we the Conservative Party are in support of that motion.

In 2010, a House of Commons committee led a statutory review of Canada's federal corporate governance framework, which led to further consultation in 2014 by Industry Canada. After hearing from witnesses, the Conservative Party put forward two amendments to make the bill stronger, and like the motion put forward by the NDP, these amendments included defining the term diversity, and requested a review to take place on the diversity section after three years. Even back in 2015, these amendments were voted down by the Liberal Party. We, the official opposition, will stand with the NDP and many witnesses to the committee on the importance to define diversity in the bill.

The NDP amendment defines diversity as:

information respecting gender representation and diversity—including in regard to colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability— among the directors and among members of senior management as defined by regulation as well as any prescribed information respecting diversity.

For a party that claims to fight for diversity, the Liberals are not even willing to tell Canadians what they mean by the word diversity. Does this sound familiar to anyone else? Well, it should.

The second amendment, suggested by almost all witnesses, was to ensure that a review of the diversity policy would happen. The timelines varied from one to five years. As a result, the opposition agrees that a three-year review would be best. We chose this time frame, because it would allow for results to come in, and if changes were necessary, they could be made promptly. Furthermore, we took into consideration the federal election, which could cut into the review if a two-year timeline was suggested. A three-year review would occur after any upcoming election.

● (1910)

We recognize that businesses play a vital role in creating jobs and generating economic growth, and that strong business strategies are central to a company's success in creating and sustaining a competitive edge. Changes proposed to the Competition Act would do just that. They would reduce business uncertainty and create a competitive marketplace, and prevent anti-competitive practices. The amendments would also reduce the administrative burden on businesses.

Modernizing the acts addressed in Bill C-25 is a welcome improvement to the federal corporate statute, and a reflection of the need to enhance the corporate governance practices in companies. With these amendments, suggested by the NDP, Bill C-25 will be Canada's next step in modernizing corporate governance.

The official opposition will stand with the NDP and the committee witnesses to have these amendments made to Bill C-25.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David de Burgh Graham): Resuming debate.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David de Burgh Graham): The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David de Burgh Graham): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David de Burgh Graham): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David de Burgh Graham): In my opinion the nays have it.

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And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David de Burgh Graham): Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 30, 2017, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 21, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

● (1915)

STATISTICS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Statistics Act, as reported without amendment from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act and whose purpose is to strengthen Statistics Canada's independence.

First, I want to speak about the census. In 2010, the government's decision to replace the mandatory long form census with the voluntary national household survey gave rise to public criticism. Concerns were raised about the quality of the national household survey data and about Statistics Canada's independence.

In reaction to this decision, a number of private members' bills were introduced in the House that would require the collection of a mandatory long form census questionnaire of equal length and scope as the 1971 census. We gave this option serious consideration, but rather than focus on protecting only the census, we chose to amend the Statistics Act to give Statistics Canada greater independence on the full range of statistical activity. We have done this by assigning to the chief statistician authority over decisions on statistical methods and operations.

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The bill also adds transparency provisions to ensure greater accountability for decisions. This approach is aligned with the United Nations fundamental principles of official statistics and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's recommendation on good practices. Some may still ask, why not entrench the content of the census in legislation to fully prevent future governments from replacing the mandatory long form census with a voluntary survey as was the case with the 2011 program? The simple answer is that no legal provision can prevent a government from changing census content.

Governments have the power to make and change laws, but more importantly, we must remember that official statistics are a public good and Statistics Canada is a publicly funded institution. It is ultimately the government's responsibility to determine the scope of the statistical system, specifically, the country's data priorities, that is to say, what is collected. This responsibility ensures that the statistical information collected is sensitive to the burdens placed on citizens as respondents, that it is sensitive to the costs they bear as taxpayers, and that the information that is produced is responsive to their needs as data users.

It must also be responsive to the government's need to make evidence-based decisions about the programs and services that affect the daily lives of Canadians such as affordable housing, public transportation, and skills training for employment. Rather than entrench the content of the long form census questionnaire in the Statistics Act, Bill C-36 addresses the fundamental issues of Statistics Canada's independence. Let me explain why.

First, the previous government's decision about the 2011 census was not about the questions to be asked, it was about removing the mandatory requirement to respond. The voluntary national household survey, as it was called, asked the same questions as would have been asked in the planned mandatory long form questionnaire that it replaced.

Consistent with our government's commitment to evidence-based decision-making, one of our first acts as a government was to reinstate the mandatory long form census in time for the 2016 census of population to ensure that the census produces high quality data. We committed to strengthen Statistics Canada's independence to ensure decisions about statistical methods and operations are based on professional principles. Bill C-36 meets this commitment.

Second, entrenching census contents in law could reduce the government's flexibility to ensure that the data collected continuously meets the needs of an ever-evolving Canadian society and economy. We just have to look at the history of the content of census. It has changed numerous times to reflect emerging issues, evolving data needs, and the development of alternative ways of collecting the information.

- (1920)

The first national census of Canada was taken in 1871 and contained 211 questions, including age, sex, religion, education, race, occupation, and ancestral origins. Subject matters and questions have been added and dropped ever since.

In 1931, questions on unemployment were added. In 1941, questions on fertility and housing were introduced. In 1986,

questions were introduced on activity limitations. In 1991, questions about common-law relationships were introduced, and questions on same-sex couples were added in 2006. In 1996, questions on unpaid work were introduced. These were removed in 2011.

These examples signal the need for flexibility and prioritization in determining the content of a census. Entrenching census content in legislation would limit this flexibility. Amending the act every time the census needs to change would be highly impractical. Our current approach to determining census content works. It is based on extensive user consultations and the testing of potential questions to reflect the changing needs of society and to ensure the census is the appropriate vehicle to respond to them. Then Statistics Canada makes a recommendation to the government on the content that should be included in the upcoming census. General questions are then prescribed by order by the Governor in Council and published in the *Canada Gazette* for transparency purposes.

Defining the long form census content in law could potentially reduce the incentives to find alternative means to gathering census information at a lower cost and respondent burden. Statistical agencies must also think about the burden they impose on citizens and businesses to provide information, and they must do so within the fiscal resources allocated by the government.

The data world is evolving rapidly. We read and hear the words "big data", "open data", and "administrative data" every day. Increasingly, statistical offices around the world are integrating these alternative and complementary sources of information into their statistical programs. They offer the potential to collect and publish high quality statistical information more frequently, at lower cost, and at lower response burden.

For example, for the 2016 census, Statistics Canada obtained detailed income information for all census respondents from administrative records provided by the Canada Revenue Agency. This approach will ensure that higher quality income data will be produced at a lower cost and with reduced burden on Canadians.

Entrenching the scope and content of the census in the Statistics Act may not serve Canadians well moving forward. It would tie us to one way of doing business that may not be the way of the future. The act should remain flexible to the evolving data needs of Canadians and their governments. It should retain the flexibility to encourage innovation to take advantage of the evolving means of collecting statistical information.

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Some have suggested that the census content should be the same as it was over 40 years ago and that the sample size for the long form should be entrenched in law. The rapidly evolving world of data suggests that we should retain the flexibility to build the foundation of a statistical system of the future, rather than restricting ourselves to continue to do what has been done in the past. We think our approach to Bill C-36 strikes the right balance and will stand the test of time.

In the time that remains, let me talk about the basic structure of Bill C-36 in terms of the independence of the chief statistical officer.

• (1925)

What we hope to do first of all is subject the appointment of the chief statistician to the Governor in Council process, which is open and transparent, in order to ensure that the best candidate for the office of chief statistician is found and selected according to that process.

Second, the underlying philosophy of the act is that questions of methodology in terms of statistical gathering, finding the best means, or using the best statistical techniques to gather information will be left to Statistics Canada, to the chief statistician and his or her team as it is described in the act.

Because we do have a Westminster parliamentary system in which ministerial accountability is one of the foundational or bedrock principles of the act, any political decisions that need to be made for political reasons, perhaps under exceptional circumstances where a governing party feels it needs a certain kind of information, will have to be made transparently in front of this House.

We are creating a great deal of independence and giving it to the office of chief statistician precisely so that person can go on and gather data in the best possible method, as he or she sees fit for professional reasons, yet we are still working in harmony with a Westminster political system, one that has worked well so far, indeed, one that, up until 2011, allowed for Statistics Canada to have a very good reputation internationally among other statistical agencies around the world.

That is the basic underlying philosophy of the act. I would be happy to answer questions if there were any.

• (1930)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-25 and Bill C-36 were both studied at the INDU committee. We had extensive conversations about the composition of boards, in both cases, trying to reflect diversity of background, thought, and gender. Having an independent board for Bill C-36 following the regulations that we are lining out on C-25 could really help us with our working with statistics in Canada.

Can the member expand on that if he agrees with me?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that the chief statistician will have access to a number of different consultative boards across the country, totalling well over 100 people, ensuring a great deal of consultative potential from across the country, fulfilling a variety of different needs. There will also be an advisory committee, envisaged as part of the act, that will allow for the professional expertise of other statistical experts in the

community. That will allow the chief statistician to make the best possible statistical decisions.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is simple. We had two chief statisticians resign their positions. Why was it that the government was unable to find any amendments to this legislation despite the fact that we had testimony for amendments? Why is there no amended legislation?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his work on the committee, in particular his ability to ask difficult, valid questions that force the process to go forward.

Both of those former chief statisticians were consulted in the gestation period of this legislation. They both appeared before the committee. Some of the things they had originally suggested found their way into the legislation. Some of the things they had suggested did not find their way into the legislation. At the end of the day, we feel we have found the appropriate balance moving forward with the appropriate piece of legislation.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the advantages of the new legislation is the defined term of office for the chief statistician.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary be kind enough to inform the House as to what the changes were, and the process? I know he explained a little about the process of how the appointment of the chief statistician will be subject to the Governor in Council process, which allows it to be open and transparent, but could he talk about the terms of the new five- to seven-year terms that the chief statistician will be allowed to have?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his work on this committee. He was my predecessor as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. I know he did a great deal of work on this file.

To answer the question, the underlying philosophy is that we have given the chief statistician a fixed term in order to protect his or her independence. Effectively, that person will not be able to be removed except for cause. It is a way of saying to the chief statistician that he cannot be removed for doing his job and cannot be removed for making the kinds of professional decisions we ask him to make, even if we disagree with him. We think that is an important measure, particularly in contrast to past procedures, such as the experience in the run-up to the 2011 census, in which the chief statistician was very much at odds with the government.

• (1935)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the comments that my hon. colleague made with regard to that unassailability, that protection of independence, we had a recommendation from the National Statistics Council that we frame the importance of the independence of StatsCan and its unassailability and put that into a preamble.

Given the previous words by my hon. colleague, why would we not put that into a preamble to ensure that Canadians understand its importance and how essential it is to guarantee the independence of the organization?

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Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, indeed there were a variety of different opinions expressed, but particularly that opinion was expressed in committee hearings during the course of deliberations on the bill.

Ultimately the answer boils down to trying to balance a Westminster political system—which we have, and which is ultimately based on the principle of ministerial responsibility, with Statistics Canada falling under the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development—with the principle of trying to maintain the independence of the chief statistical officer and Statistics Canada.

We felt that a preamble might alter that balance. We will work it through. Generally, we have had in Canada a good experience, with a few major and relatively recent exceptions, of statistical independence in Canada. We want to get back to that, and enshrine it and protect it with the legislation we have.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within the legislation, we are taking a look at getting rid of the idea that people could go to jail for not filling out forms, even though, I believe, in history it has happened maybe once, on one occasion.

We talk a lot about the chief statistician and the important changes that have been made there. It is also important to emphasize that there are other relatively minor changes, some that most people would be surprised about, such as getting rid of the clause that allows for someone to go to jail for not filling out the form.

Could my colleague share his thoughts with me in regard to that clause being deleted?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, that provision of potentially sending people to go to jail for not filling out the form was a major bone of contention. I think we have moved to a new understanding of the importance of statistical information and the importance of the data that gets gathered in the census.

In the 2016 census we were not threatening any kind of jail time for not participating, and the participation rate was phenomenally high. I think society generally understands the importance of statistical data. We do not need that kind of provision in order to get the buy-in for people to participate in the census. We have moved to a different point.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is there a need to replace one advisory body with another? What was wrong? It is not clear at all in the government's talking points or rationale what was wrong with the advisory body that existed before.

• (1940)

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the reports we had about that advisory body were that it was quite uneven. Participation rates varied. Some members took it very seriously and some members did not take it very seriously.

There are two things to note. First of all, we have made the committee smaller, but we have focused on expertise with respect to that committee. As well, there are a number of other committees, as I mentioned during the course of my remarks. There are a number of

other committees, and the chief statistician has access to many other consultative bodies across Canada in order to get the diversity of opinion necessary to have a good statistical background.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak to a piece of legislation on an issue for which I have been flooded with correspondence from constituents. This is something that resonates for Canadians.

I want to pick up on something my colleague just said. He said the best thing about the bill is that it has helped him learn how to pronounce the word “statistician”. I agree that this might be the only good thing about the bill. There are many things about the bill that are much worse, and it may be that the parliamentary secretary is finally coming around to the opposition's perspective on this bill. Hopefully, by the end of my remarks we will have sealed the deal in getting the government to realize the problems and, having benefited from the pronunciation exercise associated with the debate, agreeing with us in voting down this legislation.

Before I get into more detail, I want to pick up on the parliamentary secretary's response to my question. One of the provisions of the bill is that it would establish the Canadian statistics advisory council, which would replace the National Statistics Council. One might infer from the names that they are not that different from each other, and one would be correct. One has 13 members and the other 10 members, but when we do away with one council and replace it with another, that is a great opportunity to appoint 10 entirely new people, as if we would not notice in the opposition what is going on in that respect.

To get some clarification, I have to ask my friend across the way what could possibly motivate this legislative change, which effectively allows the government to do away with the existing council and then appoint 10 new good Liberals—I mean, good, qualified appointees—to this panel.

His response is quite revealing in its lack of detail. He tells us participation rates were uneven. Essentially, they did not think people on the council were as good as they could have been, so they have to completely change things so they can appoint a new council. Of course, we will be watching to see the extent to which the government uses this tactic. I really hope that none of the people on this new statistics advisory council were involved in developing the instrument for the government's electoral reform consultation.

There are some real problems with the government's approach to appointments in general and, I would argue, more broadly with its approach to statistics and how it considers science and information on a variety of issues, so I am going to take this opportunity to talk a bit about that as well as to talk about some of the specific provisions in this legislation.

The bill is partly seen by the government as an opportunity to try to push an important political message, which is that it really wants to associate its brand with evidence-based policy. We hear this rhetoric out of the government a lot. I think I speak for the entire official opposition in saying that we believe in evidence-based policy. We believe in data-driven decision making. For us, it is not just a slogan.

Government Orders

The member for Spadina—Fort York is heckling me again. I am sure he is preparing a great question about Ayn Rand again, which he is able to relate to all subjects in this place. I look forward to those comments, based on the member's extensive reading of that author.

If I could get back to my comments, for us as Conservatives, evidence-based decision-making is not just a slogan. It is not just something we want to put in the window. We actually look at the evidence and the details and we apply that information across a range of issues. If we look at the approach the government has taken across a range of files, we will see its total lack of regard for the evidence.

I will cite a few examples, because we have seen and debated examples in the House of the government not being interested in looking at science. The most obvious example of its complete disregard for evidence when it comes to policy-making is its approach to pipeline approval.

● (1945)

On this side of the House we believe that there is an independent process for pipeline review. There is an independent body, the National Energy Board, that collects data, conducts hearings in a reasonable time frame, and provides a report back. By and large, when the government gets a report from an independent consultative body like that, it should be listening. This actually accords with the rhetorical approach of the government.

An independent body is providing advice based on science. What is not to like? However, members of the government actually do not like that very much because, when it comes to pipeline approvals, they want to preserve the ability for the government or the cabinet—and they have clearly shown an intention to use that ability—to reject approvals that are made by independent, impartial, science-based decision-makers at the National Energy Board.

We have seen this anti-science approach when it comes to the northern gateway pipeline, an important pipeline project that would have provided market access for our energy resources, which was approved by the NEB with conditions. It was then approved by the previous government with conditions, and now we have a new government not only rejecting that but bringing in legislation to not allow tanker traffic out of northern B.C.

We know in that context that there is a great deal of tanker traffic off the coast of B.C. coming from Alaska. We have every reason to believe it is going to increase, and yet we have this unscientific—anti-science, in fact—decision by the government members. They are motivated by a political calculus that ignores the actual reality.

When we have the government coming forward with legislation, when the Liberals talk about the importance of science-based decision-making and of statistics, it is important to pose this question. Why are they not listening to the clear evidence when it comes to pipeline approval? Why are they not listening to that evidence?

I can give another example, and this is probably the clearest example of the government's disregard for good statistical methods. That was the Liberals' approach on the issue of changes to the electoral system. There was a process in place whereby a parliamentary committee representing all members of Parliament

came back with some good recommendations about how the government could proceed with the implementation of something that was actually an election commitment. That reflected the fact that many Canadians had input into the committee process. Generally speaking, parliamentary committees only hear from experts. I do not think the committee did any sort of explicitly quantitative work, but it did a great deal of qualitative work gathering opinions of Canadians and hearing those perspectives. It came back with a recommendation that a referendum be done with respect to possible different electoral systems.

After that, because the government members did not like the result of what was a good process for engaging and consulting Canadians, they decided to come up with their own process, which was obviously from a statistical perspective highly suspect. It was to have an online consultation that gets people's feelings about things that might have some kind of approximate relationship to questions around electoral systems, but not actually ask the direct obvious questions. We could not ask people if they favour a system that is more proportionate or less proportionate, has certain kinds of possible outcomes, etc. It was generally about feelings and sentiment-based calculations, and through that process, the government decided it would not proceed with it.

This was an attempt, given that the first analysis of public perspectives did not seem to produce the results the Liberals wanted, to reorganize and contort and manipulate the mechanism of consultation to not ask explicit questions but instead to contort the process to try to ensure they had the result they wanted and in the end to justify a political decision, which at that point had probably already been made, which was to back away. This is another case where we see a real disregard for the process of science, of gathering evidence, of consulting with Canadians.

I should also mention that we have the government's disregard for the science when it comes to the risks associated with marijuana use, and we have the Liberals' decision to bring forward legislation to legalize marijuana in spite of the clear risks to young people, as I said, choosing an age that does not at all reflect the science.

● (1950)

The Liberals have been criticized by all kinds of experts for setting the age at 18, for example. There is a great deal of evidence that, even if we were going to legalize it, we should recognize that there are substantial risks and scientifically demonstrated associations between early use of marijuana, even relatively occasional use, and mental health challenges later in life.

That evidence exists, yet in spite of good advice from experts on this issue, the government again has shown that it does not take evidence-based policy-making seriously when it comes to pipelines, electoral reform, and now in this case, the issue of marijuana. We have a government that does not look at or listen to the evidence. Instead, it wants to try to twist and contort how it presents statistical information in a way that is based on a predetermined, preset political agenda. This might satisfy the Liberals' political calculus, but it does not accord with the kinds of principles, the kind of lofty objectives they frequently talk about.

Government Orders

By the way, every time we have a debate about science in the House, it is interesting to see the way the Liberals try to politicize the issues. I remember a case during question period where we had a member who has spent decades working as a scientist asking the Minister of Science a question. The minister said that it was good to see the member finally taking an interest in science. In fact, it was the member for Sarnia—Lambton, who has a long history of working and being involved in scientific development. It shows the very political lens through which the government views this.

Therefore, it is with that in mind, with the level of concern about the way the government uses these words and about its actual record when it comes to evidence-based decision-making, that we approach this legislation. It is legislation that contains a number of elements that raise big questions about what is actually going on and what the government is trying to do.

I spoke earlier, and I want to develop this point a little more, about a specific provision in the bill, which is this new council that the Liberals want to set up. The bill would establish a Canadian statistics advisory council, which would replace the National Statistics Council. I am sure what we are going to hear, and maybe members have already said this, is that there will be an open process for applications, anybody can apply, they will be evaluated dispassionately based on fair and neutral criteria, and they will come to the conclusion that in fact reveals that, well, the best people were former Liberal Party donors, cabinet ministers, or something like that.

The government's record with respect to appointments all the way along is very spotty. There are major questions out there about how the government actually comes to its appointment decisions. I think there are a number of examples that we could talk about that are fairly obvious. For instance, we had the government promising an independent process with respect to senators, and yet, strikingly, the senators that the government appointed are very much voting with government. How could that be? It is almost as if there was a political lens applied to those appointments. Just because the Liberals say something does not make it true. If we look at the evidence, the voting records of those appointed suggests certainly that this is not a dispassionate calculus based on some politically neutral criteria at all. They are trying to send that message even though it does not accord with the reality.

Of course, there is the fiasco in this place around the appointment of a new Commissioner of Official Languages. We had different messages given by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and by a witness at committee—I think the Commissioner of Official Languages appointee herself—saying essentially different things about the conversations that took place in the lead-up to the decision around that appointment. We had repeated questions for the Minister of Canadian Heritage about what conversations were had and how those decisions were made. In the end, it was always a deflection rather than a direct response to the question about that appointment.

However, the reality is that we had a provincial Liberal cabinet minister who the government intended to put in the position, which is a very important office and supposed to be an independent officer of Parliament. Obviously, that person took a step back when it was clear this was not something that was going to be accepted. However, it was not inevitable that would happen, and the government's consistent defence of that appointment decision

obviously raises real red flags when we look at the fact that the Liberals are bringing forward legislation that would allow them to entirely reappoint this statistics advisory body.

● (1955)

With all these different appointment issues in the mix, this leads up to what is one critical position, the Ethics Commissioner. The Prime Minister has recused himself, supposedly, from being involved in the appointment of the Ethics Commissioner. However, he has given that power over to the government House leader, someone who clearly serves at the pleasure of the Prime Minister. It is hard to imagine that there would not be some kind of a conversation that would take place, wink-wink, nudge-nudge, especially given that there may have been conversations that took place around the Commissioner of Official Languages, and yet we had different things said in different places, by different people who were supposed to be part of that conversation, about what conversations actually did and did not take place.

There is a huge credibility problem with the government when it comes down to who it is putting in place for these appointments. When we look at a bill like this, it is worth asking who is actually going to be involved in the appointments. How can the opposition, as we look at this legislation, have any kind of certainty that, as the government gets rid of one body on the basis of what the parliamentary secretary called “participation rates” being uneven, we will see something quite different, and that we will see a body that will actually, in effect, increase the government's control of it.

The government can talk about independent bodies, groups, and agencies and oversight mechanisms all it wants, but then we have to look at how those are formed, who is putting them in place, and who is appointing those people to those positions. If we do not have confidence that the government is actually looking at merit, if it is clear, based on the past track record of the government, and I think it is, that it is only making these appointments or predominantly making these appointments on the basis of partisan criteria, then we cannot, at all, have confidence in the way in which that decision is going to unfold.

I do want to make an additional point with respect to this legislation, and that is that this legislation does not directly affect whether we have a mandatory long form census. We currently have a mandatory long form census, and that will not be changed either way with respect to this legislation. It is not necessary to pass it in order to achieve what clearly is a stated objective of the government, which is to have that mandatory long form census in place.

Other provisions of this bill are evident but are not really the ones I have chosen to dwell on in my speech, but I do want to draw the attention of members to them nonetheless. The bill involves the appointment of a chief statistician during “good behaviour” for a fixed renewable term of five years. It does mean that once a chief statistician is in place, it is at least much more difficult for the government to remove that individual. It also, of course, brings us back to this question of how we can actually trust the government to make credible appointments, if we consider the track record of the government when it comes to those appointments.

Government Orders

The legislation also says that the minister will no longer be able to issue directives on methods, procedures, and operations. The minister will still be able to issue directives on sort of a broad scope of statistical programs, but it will no longer be up to him or her to dictate methods, procedures, and operations.

I have to say I do think the government has a very poor track record when it comes to determining statistical methods, if we judge from the way it organized consultations on the issue of changes to the electoral system. I certainly would not want to see the government manipulating those dynamics around statistical methods and operations. Again, we have observed what the likely problems would be if it were trying to essentially do the same thing that it has already done with regard to other statistical issues, and that is shape the way in which those consultations took place in order to achieve a particular outcome. The broad problem is still there, given the remaining authority and given the issue of appointments.

● (2000)

To summarize very quickly, the main problems that I brought attention to in the legislation are this.

First, we have seen the government's clear lack of willingness to take evidence-based decision-making beyond a slogan. It is clearly a slogan it repeats over and over. However, from the way in which it makes decisions, there is no evidence it is something it considers.

There is also the issue of the lack of credibility the government has with respect to appointments and the way in which those always seem to reflect a partisan criteria.

On that basis, we will be opposing the bill.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the remarks of the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. The lack of real understanding of what happened in the appointments process was almost dizzying. I really cannot imagine anybody from the Conservative Party of Canada talking about appointments and credibility in the same sentence. It is amazing.

Being from Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, you would understand that if we were to do some research with respect to Peter MacKay's wedding party, we would find not one person in that wedding party who had not been appointed to a position by the previous government. They were all Conservatives and all lacked credibility in those positions.

Does the member not think that the process set up by the current Prime Minister was to make it open and transparent and to ensure there was credibility and understanding with respect to the issues with which the Liberals would deal in regard to the Prime Minister's appointments? This is all about making good appointments. That party over there has absolutely no credibility when it comes to talking about appointments and credibility in the same sentence. Would he not agree?

The Speaker: Before the member agrees or otherwise, I just want to remind members of this. I appreciate and realize that some of the commentary is in good humour. However, I would ask members to try to keep it down to a reasonable level.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I agree with you. There was some good humour from the member across the way. I was expecting a question from my friend from Spadina—Fort York. However, the member for Malpeque certainly gave him a run for his money in the nature of that question.

Usually, this type of question shows the way in which the government is always trying to apply a very partisan filter when it comes to the way it does things. It thinks that the only people who should be appointed to these bodies are Liberals. That is clear from its record of appointments to a range of different bodies.

There is something the current government is doing that the previous government did not do. It will tear up a body and create, effectively, an identical body, with a smaller number of members. We know the government will then be able to make its appointments without the proper continuity in place, which we would have if we preserved the existing body.

Therefore, I encourage the member to take off his rose-coloured glasses when he looks at the actions of the government. We have already seen his leadership criticizing the House leader on her approach to the Standing Orders. If the member for Malpeque digs a little deeper into this, he will be able to show similar leadership and challenge the government on this issue.

● (2005)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan's effort to present the Conservatives as the true defenders of evidence-based policy.

It is possible that the legislation we are debating this evening was motivated by the recent resignation of the chief statistician. However, the last time a chief statistician resigned was under the former Conservative government in response to its decision to eliminate the mandatory long form census.

Therefore, could the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan educate us as to how eliminating the mandatory long form census supported the commitment of the Conservatives to evidence-based policy?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I know my friends from the NDP have a great interest in trying to convince the public that there is no real difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives. If we ever had an NDP government in place, there would be a lot more than the chief statistician resigning.

It is fairly clear, looking at the track record and going back to my comments, that the government does not have respect for evidence-based decision-making. It has done a very poor job in applying the evidence that exists across a range of policy areas. It is trying to use the power that it has through legislation to control the appointment process and to reappoint people. That is what it is doing and that is what Conservatives are objecting to in our opposition of the bill.

Government Orders

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former member of city council who had to endure the Ford brothers and listen to probably two of the smartest Conservatives who have ever had to speak about any issue, talk about facts and evidence, we often said in Toronto that when those two very proud members of the Conservative Party spoke, that—

Mr. James Bezan: Just call it the centre of the universe.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: The centre of intellectual Toryism, Mr. Speaker.

They never wanted the facts. What they wanted was the anecdotal evidence. What we just had was a long presentation of anecdotal evidence, which has no bearing in reality whatsoever.

I did not hear the member opposite even talk about what was in the bill. He talked about virtually every other thing under the sun, except for the bill with any great sort of specific analysis.

One reason we need the long form census and we need to start gathering statistics and evidence so governments can make decisions is precisely because the previous government's editing and destruction of the census process left major cities in a very difficult situation. The City of Toronto was suing the federal government because there was no process to count people who lived in high-rise buildings. In fact, it left high-rise buildings out of the equation.

In the riding I represent, three-quarters of which is high-rise and condominiums in the downtown core of Toronto, people were not even asked to be counted, let alone enrolled in the census process. As a result of that, federal programs, largely dispensed on a per capita basis, left huge swaths of our country unaccounted for in the calculations and therefore unfunded with respect to the acquisition of infrastructure money and social service dollars that would be delivered to a major city. The short-form census had a devastating impact on equality in the country.

Do you support a long form census, do you support accurate gathering of information, and if you do, why are you not supporting this bill?

The Speaker: I hope the hon. parliamentary secretary is not asking if the Speaker does any of those things. I think he knows that when one uses the word “you” around here, one is referring to the Speaker. I would invite the member to remember to direct his comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the centre for intellectual liberalism for his question. He mentioned he cut his teeth in politics in Toronto with the Ford brothers. Their pedagogic influence is very clear.

The member said that I did not speak to the bill and then proceeded to ask a question that showed he did not really know the detail of the bill himself. We currently have a mandatory long form census. Of course, the Conservative government never proposed to do away with the long form census. While encouraging people to fill it out, we did not make it mandatory. However, the Liberals made the

census mandatory again. The bill would not in any way change that reality.

I have spoken specifically about the provisions of the bill, changing the way in which the chief statistician is appointed, changing the powers the minister has with respect to statistical programs and procedures, and, yes, the abolition of the Canadian Statistics Advisory Council, replacing it with the national statistics council. The member's “the sky is falling” act is a little rich, but beyond that, it does not speak even to the details of the bill.

● (2010)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, for his excellent understanding of the bill and the facts and stats before us today.

The rhetoric from the Liberal Party is often its commitment to statistics and evidence. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan referenced Bill C-45, which is the marijuana legislation. We know there is a lot of evidence and statistics that surround that legislation, which seems to have been completely disregarded when we look at the evidence from the medical community and its recommendations for proper age limits.

We also know other jurisdictions that have legalized the use of marijuana have experienced up to a 100% increase in traffic fatalities. Every year, 1,000 Canadians die due to traffic fatalities in Canada. It seems to me that will double with the proposed legislation. Why would the Liberal government—

The Speaker: Unfortunately, the question was a little longer than we had time for.

A very short answer from the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, there are two clear ways in which the marijuana legislation ignores the science.

First, it ignores the science around detection while driving. There is the presumption in the legislation that testing for impairment due to marijuana is, from a scientific perspective, as easy as testing for impairment due to alcohol. There is a fundamental difference in substances. One is fat soluble and one is water soluble, which means the mechanism for testing is much more complex and not yet established in the case of marijuana compared to alcohol.

The other thing, with respect to the science of marijuana, is the impact to young people, the risks, and where the age should be. I spoke about that again. Hopefully we will see improvements when it comes to committee.

Again, the initial drafting of legislation is another case where the government does not respect the science.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on Bill C-36 with regard to the census. One thing we can be clear about in the debate on this legislation is it is critically important how we spend taxpayers' money. That is central to the census itself. It is no laughing matter, especially when we look at some of the people involved.

Government Orders

Shame on both the Liberals and Conservatives for their actions in regard to former chief statisticians. It needs to be identified as quite a serious situation. Munir Sheikh resigned under the Conservatives and Wayne Smith resigned under the Liberals. These are key resignations. These are chief statisticians who are respected across the planet. They were seen to have had their integrity compromised by being senior bureaucrats in an administration. They ended up being whistle-blowers. We know not just domestically but across the globe, whistle-blowers often become martyrs. They often become targets. They and their families are often affected for going public with something where they compromised their own personal well-being versus that of the state or the job they do. That is what took place with our chief statisticians.

It is important to remember who they are. Munir Sheikh, for example, was a Canadian immigrant from Pakistan who later on became a doctor of economics and worked in the Department of Finance for many years as a deputy minister, later becoming a chief statistician, and resigning from his position at Stats Canada. That was the first time I had seen a resignation like that in the 15 plus years I have been here. I had never witnessed someone take on the administration like that. That came about because of a number of things related to Stats Canada and how it was treated and valued.

Therefore, it is important to review what is so important about the Statistics Act and why it is so important for Canadians. A chief statistician is responsible for the overall act and the administration of it. The issues they monitor across the country are where, at the end of the day, taxpayers' money is spent. It is about income. It is about the labour market. It is education, housing, transportation, languages, persons with disabilities, citizenship, immigration, aboriginal peoples, and ethnicity. They even determine where to place a fire hall for municipalities. There was discussion today about high-rise buildings. We have seen tragedies with high-rise buildings, most recently in London. However, we have the necessary data accumulation on municipalities to do the proper planning for allocating resources, because Statistics Canada knows where the populations are. If we do not have that information, we not only could knowingly set ourselves up for failure but we could unwittingly do so, because we do not have that information.

It is similar with economic growth. The latest census of 2016 shows 35% of Canada's population now resides in the Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal areas. That is a significant concentration of human population for such a geographic mass as Canada. That also makes it very important for us to attract investment and innovation for other areas. The more vulnerable communities, related to not having proper statistical information, are smaller communities and smaller pockets of population. It is how housing is decided. I mentioned fire halls for municipal service. There is all of that, and even affordable housing and the cost of housing, which actually translates into economic development, where businesses decide where and what type of business they should grow here in Canada.

● (2015)

When I came here, I had previously worked as an employment counsellor for persons with disabilities and youth at risk and I was a city councillor in Windsor West where I represented one of the great parliamentarians for 39 years, the deputy prime minister at the time, the right hon. Herb Gray. As a city councillor, my area that he

represented was pegged to be part of what is called the complete count. In Windsor West there were many new immigrants and we had a lot of issues related to language and culture, so our statistical returns related to the census were lower.

That meant that we were missing out on valuable data necessary for Mr. Gray to advocate for housing, language services, a series of things that were necessary for the production, value, and contribution of the citizens of that area because of the challenges. Because we had English as a second language growing as a concern, at around a 50% return rate for our census, we were missing out on those opportunities. We also had people who wanted to participate, wanted to do better things, but they could not.

We were one of four areas across the country, at that time, of the 301 ridings federally that did a door-to-door campaign to help people get enumerated for the census. There is a litany of reasons why that is important, but it affects the funding and the contributions. If we are coming from a community that does not have those things, as identified, it is hard to advocate for that.

It is not just about government services, it is also about businesses. Businesses use this information from labour market surveys not only to identify customer populations, but also to identify concerns about shortages of workers with certain skill sets. The information in the census is used to identify that for investment. One of the number one things we hear to this day is the fact that we are going to be short certain types of workers, whether it be engineers or mechanical workers, and not having the people to staff in those regions and not preparing other populations to either get that skill set, or having to import that labour versus educating Canadians and invest in education to do so. That affects a multitude of things and diminishes our middle class.

We did that in Windsor West. Later on as a representative of Windsor West in this chamber, I understood quite clearly the value of a clean statistical database for advocating for my community and also for this country. I became very intimate with how it works. About 50% of persons with disabilities are not working in Canada. Many have given up and are not in the system. I was part of a group that was able to include more persons with disabilities. I want to note that the good work of the public servants in helping access jobs for persons with disabilities during that time was critical. I am still grateful today because I know some people are still working and can use the job to get something else.

Government Orders

Ivan Fellegi, a chief statistician at that time, was under pressure to privatize our census. England, for example, had outsourced the collection of data to different third parties and Canada was outsourcing its census to Lockheed Martin. A campaign I was part of looked to protect Canadians' data from Lockheed Martin because many people had ethical concerns about Lockheed Martin collecting our data. It was an arms manufacturer predominantly based in the United States that produced weapons which were banned under Canadian law like cluster munitions and so on. It was collecting our data and not only that, it would store and implement the data. At that time, the U.S. went through the implementation of the Patriot Act. We discovered it was going to assemble this data outsourced from Canada in the United States.

• (2020)

Why that is important is because once the Patriot Act was implemented, the hard reality was that all our census data, personal and private information we thought was protected, was now susceptible to the United States. Under the Patriot Act, the way it worked at that time, and most of which still exists in this format today, is that if a court order was issued for information, the company could not tell the actual proprietor of that information that the information was actually being usurped and used by the American government.

It would have been against the law for Lockheed Martin to disclose to Canada that the information it gathered in Canada would be used. Credit card companies and others have faced some scrutiny since then. The Privacy Commissioner has piped in. From British Columbia, and other areas, there is quite a record on this. We fought quite hard to get that information to stay in Canada, which we were able to do.

Getting past that, we continued to have a fairly stable census, until the Conservatives came into power and created the voluntary national household survey. It was put out there as a cost-cutting measure, in many respects, and also as privacy protection for Canadians. Not having the bully of government telling people they have to disclose information or they were going to kick in doors, make people fill in the census form, or send them off to jail.

I remember the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka getting up a number of times in the chamber, talking about people being intimidated. The jail aspect was certainly the heightened element that received media attention from many facets for many months, more than a year. To this day, it is still one of the more laughable things ever pronounced by a minister in the history of Canada: that people were going to be locked up and have the key thrown away for not completing their census. The essence of it was really a side distraction, which worked.

The national household survey came back with around a 26% response rate. That 26% response rate meant that our statistics, which had been the envy of many industrialized worlds, were now a diminished response. We lost a significant portion of the reliability of that data to make decisions on income, labour market, education, housing, transportation, languages, disabilities, citizenship, immigration, aboriginal people, and ethnicity. All the intel on those things went down to 26%.

The other interesting thing about that is that it cost us an additional \$22 million. We received a quarter of the results, paid an additional \$22 million, and then it became very worthless in many respects. This is more the technical aspect of it that some people may not care for, but it is important. Think of the centrepiece of our census as a backstop for other labour market surveys, whether it be polling, labour market agriculture, labour market related to industrial development, or labour market for investment. All those different things would be targeted in smaller surveys, but the overall sample of the statistical census would provide some of the best statistical information. Poof, that was gone. All that continuum we had was basically disrupted by that introduction.

That is when Munir Sheikh, and I discussed some of his qualifications as an economist and a deputy at the Department of Finance for many years, resigned. He resigned because he could no longer do his job.

We pressed for changes and then the Liberals and opposition agreed with changes as well. I tabled a member's bill, as did a couple of other members, to restore the independence. This bill would do some of that. It would provide some of those elements, but it would not go far enough.

• (2025)

Wayne Smith, the latest chief statistician in terms of Service Canada, resigned because of that. He resigned because Service Canada has become a large, encompassing agency for intelligence and support services. The problem it has is that much of our census information that is used now has to flow into this information of shared services, creating an independence issue about the data falling in there, then getting data back and the use of it. This created quite a problem, and Wayne Smith has now resigned.

We now have the bill which will make Statistics Canada somewhat independent. I say somewhat independent, because overall it does fulfill the things I described in the first part of my speech relating to information gathering, creating the lineal information necessary for statistical information use, the gathering, and how it restores those elements. That is critically important.

We are very grateful we will have that, but it does not actually go the full nine yards, so right now we still have a situation where the minister can still make political decisions about the questions that are asked in the census. It still takes away from the scientific approach we would like to have, and the independence, because we do pay, and we do actually ask someone to come into this position. It is very much a sought after career position to have. If it is independent, we get some of the best in the world. We will still have the minister's control over that, so I worry about the fact we could have some politicization of it.

Government Orders

It has been mentioned, and there has been banter back and forth between the Conservatives and Liberals about patronage and the appointment process, but it is a serious thing to consider. We are just dealing in my neck of the woods right now, a patronage appointment, the Gordie Howe Bridge, and Dwight Duncan becoming quite controversial, because there is a partisanship past appointment and there are partisanship attacks, including Ontario Progressive Conservatives, the American administration, and so forth. I get the seriousness of that, and what is at stake there, but what I am worried about is, what happens next time? Now that this is enshrined in law, it becomes very difficult for us to get that independence.

The Statistics Canada Department is one of 42 agencies that are supposed to be at arm's length from the government, but unfortunately, with this legislation, it is still within choking distance. Yes, it is at arm's length, but a choking distance away. I am concerned about the fact we will not see that happening. Wayne Smith identified some of those issues and concerns.

We will eliminate the jail time. It will be completely eliminated, so it can no longer be a distraction, and in the future there will be no ability for the minister to say something that would make people run, or think about something different from what the real serious issue is, which is actually the increased cost, or the change of the census, which is important. There will also still be 92 years of census information before it goes public.

In his testimony, Wayne Smith said that Bill C-36 moves the Statistics Act substantially in the right direction, creates no new problems, but fails to fully address independence, the need for full quinquennials, mandatory census of population, or the modernization of the legislation to build a statistical system adapted to the rapidly evolving needs and challenges of the 21st century. He concluded that there is still work to be done. We proposed some amendments given to us in committee by Mr. Smith and others, but they were not taken into consideration.

We will be supporting this. It is a good step forward, but it is a missed opportunity. We get to hit a double instead of a home run out of this one, so we will take it. We advance the case, and most important, Canadians and the use of our money will be better off served with data that is reliable than not.

● (2030)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's intervention tonight brings me back to many discussions we had at the industry committee. I always value what he brings, in terms of passion and anecdotes. It is better than the humour and irony we were hearing earlier. The Conservative member could not have been serious with most of what he was saying about the previous Conservative government being good at statistics.

Statistics were being used as policy-based evidence, and we are moving toward evidence-based policy, I hope, with this legislation. We looked at how to determine the process to have statistics independent. We talked about the United Nations at our committee, and how it was writing principles that the OECD had adopted, so that we could do report cards nation to nation and know that we are operating under some similar principles of independence.

Professional independence in Canada was always a matter of convention instead of a matter of law. We are trying to move toward having independence as a matter of law, and we had some great conversations at the INDU committee about how we could that. Munir Sheikh was a great witness we heard from. He had resigned seven years ago over political interference in statistics. He was trying to be independent, but he found a lot of political interference.

When we are looking at the Westminster system, ministerial control has to go through the House of Commons. Major changes to census questions, or other critical questions have to go through the House. Would the member comment on where we stand with the Westminster system in this policy?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Guelph for his contribution at committee. We actually have a well functioning committee, in many respects. When we look at this legislation, there were several meetings, and members agreed to it. His question is quite important, actually, because he does mention something I never did. He brought it up several times at committee, and it is the issue of the OECD and its level of standards.

Where we differentiate between New Democrats and Liberals is that the OECD's statement, that the former chief statistician said we should have as part of our preamble, creates a bit of a standardization or improvement to the Westminster system for accountability. He is correct, though. It is reportable to Parliament, via the minister, and the committee does have oversight. It is not that it has no control, but we have to make the political movement to get it here versus that of the chief statistician having the written element and expression in the actual legislation, so that it gives it a bit more teeth.

That is where we distinguish a difference. However, it is a good example of where we can achieve improvements. The committee had seven meetings on this topic, and despite our differences, at least we were getting this far. Perhaps, when we are done in this chamber, we can get some amendments in the future, if necessary.

● (2035)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the many efforts that my colleague, the member for Windsor West, has made advancing his own legislation to protect the professionalism, and the independence of the public service in relation to the census and Statistics Canada. I would like to hear more about how the member's efforts were received in this House and in the public service.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the ability to go back to this as I really believe that Wayne Smith and Munir Sheikh are public heroes, whistle-blowers. I know that Pat Martin, a former New Democrat in this chamber, as members will probably recall, often had legislation to push whistle-blowing, allowing public servants to come forward without feeling reprisal, intimidation, and attacks on them or their families. We have seen, in this case, two resignations by individuals who tried to improve a public service and a public agency, one of 42 that Canada has.

Government Orders

My colleague is quite right with regard to the muzzling issue of scientists being the precursor of the previous Harper administration. It was quite well felt. When we talk to public servants right now, there is still an aversion, and we still have not seen a comfort zone returned, but I am hoping that culture has not. I guess it is how we want to manage things. I still see it with the Liberal Party administration that is currently here. It was different with Chrétien and his group at that time; however, there is still massive micromanagement taking place. It might have a happy face on it, but it is still taking place.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Windsor West spoke about shared services. In this modern age, technology advancements are pushing increasingly more businesses and governments to pool certain services together. Under this approach, costs are lowered, but more importantly, experts can focus on what they are really good at, and leave others to be the experts in their own field. Would the member opposite agree with that?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I would disagree. It is a fallacy to assume that just because services are pooled that efficiencies are created. I would point to the Phoenix debacle, the payment system for public servants being a classic fail. In fact, hundreds of millions of dollars, about \$400 million, has gone to just clean that up.

Shared services is becoming such an issue. Again, what we get out of Statistics Canada is a money maker in many respects. When we look at it, we sell the data that has actually been accumulated. Personal data and privacy is protected, but businesses and third parties, universities and others, purchase products from that. They are purchasers of those products, paying millions of dollars to buy them. What they have said is they like the independence of Statistics Canada as a preferred product, and they would pay for that service. We saw statistics erode, in terms of the usefulness, in terms of selling it to the business sector, and our profits went down.

For this issue, the gold star of statistic management and maintenance is the independence, away from shared services. It is well identified by all research and other capacities. It is also less adverse to risk, because it is not exposed to the greater population of contamination possibilities, versus that of it being more secure and safety-sealed in its own usage. Again, the customers who are purchasing the data do so because of its reliability.

Giving up that income stream for an ideological stance of just throwing it all together is not always the most efficient way of doing things. If that was always the case, just putting everything together, assuming that costs are going to be lowered, then we would not even have a small business.

• (2040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague from across the way could give us some sort of clear indication as to how the NDP will be voting on this piece of legislation. I have always thought, in looking at the actions that are going to be following the passage of this bill, this as a positive thing for Statistics Canada. Even though I appreciate the member across the way might have a number of concerns, would he not agree this is, in fact, a step forward for Statistics Canada, and therefore the NDP would vote in favour of it?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the parliamentary secretary missed it. If he checks the blues, I said three times that the NDP would be supporting the legislation.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that we were not able to agree on was the number of people who should be on the advisory board. I know the member for Windsor West had some definite ideas about that. Could he share them for the record tonight?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what would work better. We went from a larger number, in the 40s, down to a smaller group. One of the concerns I had, with this and similar legislation, is diversity. What I appreciated hearing from not only the minister but also the parliamentary secretaries and others along the way is that this new model proposes a smaller group. It might be open in the future if it does not perform for greater diversity, for regional elements, persons with disabilities, gender, and also to be more reflective of making sure that smaller and other regions are not left out. The government understands there is a sensitivity around that, and hopefully if the group does not perform, it will be forced into action sooner than later.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that Statistics Canada is recognized throughout the world as a first-class example of how important it is to draw in information to make good, solid policy decisions. That applies whether it is the government or the private sector. That is what StatsCan is all about. This is not new for us in the Liberal Party. We have consistently argued that Statistics Canada is absolutely critical from a policy point of view.

If I may, I will start off my comments by complimenting all those individuals who work at Statistics Canada. The work they do is second to no other. That is one of the reasons many other countries around the world look to Canada and Statistics Canada and want to know how Statistics Canada has been so effective in collecting the information needed to make decisions.

I found it most interesting when the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was talking about science-based decisions. He used a number of examples. I could not help but reflect on one of the moves of the former prime minister in 2010. The government of the day, under Stephen Harper, decided to get rid of the mandatory long form census. The immediate response was amazing. It was immediate and severe, but the Conservative Party was determined, whether it made sense or not, no matter what the different stakeholders had to say, to move forward on getting rid of the mandatory long form census. It was at a huge cost.

I was quite disappointed, along with members of the Liberal Party, the many different stakeholders, scientists, and individuals working at Statistics Canada. In fact, the chief statistician resigned over that issue, from what I understand. It was surprising, given how important those numbers are.

Government Orders

Let me cite a couple of examples. The member who spoke earlier talked about the private sector. The private sector very much relies on information it receives from Statistics Canada to make decisions on the direction a business might be going. It is very dependant on getting the correct numbers.

The type of information that can be drawn out through Statistics Canada is amazing. I would encourage members, and the public, to look at some of the things that come out of Statistics Canada. The most obvious are things like employment rates and population. I often will turn to Statistics Canada to talk about Canada's population. It is just over 36 million. In the province of Manitoba, it is 1.3 million. In the metropolitan Winnipeg area it is just over 700,000. Using Statistics Canada, we can see where the growth is actually taking place. I like to be able to talk to my constituents about that.

● (2045)

Housing statistics from Statistics Canada are often debated, whether among individuals within our own caucus making representation or by representatives lobbying the government.

The province of Manitoba has been a have-not province for many years, unfortunately. I would like to see that turn around. It cannot be quick enough. One of the equalizing factors in Canada is the equalization transfer payment for health care and social services. We are talking about billions of dollars transferred from Ottawa to the provincial and territorial jurisdictions. Those transfers are based on statistical information that is often provided by Statistics Canada.

For example, Manitoba spends well over \$12 billion on health care alone. A good portion of that money comes from Ottawa to support the provincial department of health in the decisions it makes to administer the Canada Health Act and ensure that Canadians get the services they expect, whether they be emergency services, palliative care, or mental health services. We have talked in this place a great deal about hospice care. There are so many needs within the health care system. It is absolutely critical that the federal government continue to contribute health care dollars to our province.

To get the numbers right, we need to have a good understanding of the demographics in our communities. Without that level of accuracy, some provinces might not be given as much as they should to provide the same relative health care delivery as neighbouring provinces.

There are some provinces that have more wealth than other provinces because they have exports of oil or manufactured products. For many years, Ontario and Alberta contributed to the equalization fund. Provinces such as Nova Scotia and Manitoba have depended on receiving money. If they do not get the dollars they need, they cannot provide the health care Canadians expect.

In transferring billions of dollars to the provinces in one form or another, we need to understand the demographics, the social conditions, and the economic conditions of each province and territory.

To make decisions, we need to have good numbers, and that is what this legislation is really all about. Bill C-36 is about providing a stronger sense of independence to Statistics Canada.

There are four areas on which I would like to provide some comment with respect to Bill C-36. One is that we would reinforce that Statistics Canada needs to be more independent.

● (2050)

There are several things being incorporated in the legislation that would allow Statistics Canada to have that independence. One is statistical procedures, methods, and professional standards employed for the production of statistics. Currently, a lot of that is done directly through the ministry. It is not necessarily the chief statistician who is ultimately responsible. In essence, we would provide the chief statistician greater responsibility, thereby giving more independence. We see that as a very strong benefit, and long overdue.

One thing I love about the Internet is that there is so much information at our fingertips, but I would suggest that there are very few websites as reliable as Statistics Canada's. Releasing published information by downloading it onto the Internet at the appropriate time helps facilitate basic information. It also indicates to others who might have an interest in getting more detailed information that they can do so through Stats Canada.

The chief statistician and Stats Canada would have greater independence in the timing and method of the dissemination of compiled statistics. It is also important that we give more responsibility, through the legislation, to the operations and staff of Statistics Canada. If we look at the legislation from that perspective, Statistics Canada would have more independence.

I asked a member of the New Democratic Party what position the party was taking. I am pleased to hear that it is supporting the legislation. As for the criticisms the member made of the legislation, there is always room to improve the system. We can always make things better, and Liberals take that very seriously. Many of the ideas that have been raised will continue to be discussed. Hopefully, at some point in the future, there may be an opportunity to revisit the issue. The current suggestions, I believe, as the member opposite indicated, are worthy of support.

We are trying to increase transparency around decisions and directives, and not only for Statistics Canada. Minister after minister and individual members on the Liberal benches have talked about the importance of transparency and accountability, because we understand that it is what Canadians want of government. We want to pass this legislation to assure Canadians that we will provide more transparency and better decisions.

We would appoint the chief statistician for fixed renewable terms of five years, with removal only for cause by the Governor in Council.

● (2055)

We believe that this approach will provide greater confidence and comfort around the position of chief statistician. We will know that the work is being done as Canadians expect, and the opportunity to be appointed and to retain the position will be improved.

Government Orders

Along the same lines of creating independence for Statistics Canada, we are creating the Canadian statistics advisory council. I believe that is a wonderful move by the government. I understand the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was very critical of that aspect and made reference to Liberals being appointed to this council, but one of the things that differentiates the Harper government from this government is the manner in which appointments are being made.

The system that we have put in place represents real change from the way the Harper government made appointments. There the prime minister and the government decided who they wanted to appoint, and it had very little to do with merit and ability. People found out about it well after the fact. There was no genuine attempt to advertise or to open up the process.

In contrast, today one can do a Google search on the appointment process. There is a website for appointments, and Canadians should know that the appointments that are made today are advertised. All Canadians are welcome to apply. We believe this is extremely important. We have seen an overwhelmingly positive response to the invitation for all Canadians to get involved and get engaged in the many appointments that the federal government makes.

It has been encouraging to see not dozens or hundreds but thousands of Canadians in all regions not only understanding the difference between this government and the former government on appointments, but going beyond that by expressing their interest in becoming a part of the appointments process by applying for many of the positions that are being put forward.

The opposition will say it is Liberals. People are not excluded because they happen to be a Liberal, but Kim Campbell, who received an appointment, was not a Liberal. She was the Conservative prime minister of Canada. The appointments that have been taking place have been made in a fashion that clearly demonstrates that they are based on merit.

Diversity is also important. Earlier today I talked about the importance of diversity in our 200,000-plus corporations and the important role government plays to encourage that diversity. We have a Prime Minister who has initiated a new process to ensure that we get that diversification, and it has been working.

One statistic I recall is that of around 160 government appointments, 60% were female. The number of visible minorities who have been appointed has dramatically increased, so I have no problem in doing a comparison of our process of appointments with others.

However, at the core is the importance of having Statistics Canada being more independent, more at arm's length.

There are three other points in the legislation that I wanted to highlight, but my time has already expired. I hope to be able to expand on those other points in questions and comments.

● (2100)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is correct that the NDP will support this legislation because it makes some minor improvements. However, it does not address the most recent threat to the independence of

Statistics Canada. What motivated Wayne Smith, the former chief statistician, to resign was the lack of IT support provided to Statistics Canada by Shared Services Canada. This legislation does not solve that problem.

I note that there was a provision in the budget bill allowing the minister responsible for Shared Services Canada to exempt certain organizations from the requirement to use Shared Services Canada. However, at the government operations committee we were told that this provision would not be used to exempt Statistics Canada and allow it to acquire the IT support it requires for its needs.

Therefore, I am wondering if the member for Winnipeg North could explain to us how, whether through this bill or some other means, the government intends to ensure that Statistics Canada has the IT services it needs to conduct its research and fulfill its independent mandate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member makes reference to an initiative that was in the last budget. However, there are more budgets to come, and there are also other ways for the different issues that Statistics Canada will be dealing with over a number of years to come to the floor of the House, such as a legislative or budgetary mechanism, or whatever else might be available for the ministers responsible.

The real strength of Bill C-36 is the support we are providing for Statistics Canada to become more independent. Although that is at its core, there are also other measures, such as removing the requirement to seek consent for the transfer of census-related data to Library and Archives Canada 92 years after the taking of a census and removing the penalty of imprisonment while retaining financial penalties for refusing to complete a mandatory survey or refusing to grant, or impeding access to, information under the Statistics Act. There are also some technical changes taking place.

All in all, this is good legislation. I am glad that the NDP is supporting it. Hopefully, that will shed some light on the member's question.

● (2105)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I understand that the member mentioned me in his speech. I am sorry that I missed the reference and cannot respond to it directly. However, I wonder if he will acknowledge the significant failure of the government and its lack of credibility with respect to appointments and the problem with the Liberals asking us to pass a piece of legislation that effectively allows them to reappoint the people responsible for giving statistical advice.

I know this member often attests to the good intentions of the government, but good intentions are not enough when they do not square at all with the government's record on appointments. Will the member not acknowledge the failure of the government in this respect and realize there is a need for a better explanation of how it will behave with regard to the statistics council, given the way it has behaved in the past?

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech earlier and picked up on a couple of his points. One was with respect to his misinformed interpretation of how appointments are made by this government. I indicated that I would welcome the opportunity to contrast our appointments with the Stephen Harper way of making appointments. I can assure the member that the appointments process today is very much an open one, whereby Canadians are invited to become engaged. They can go to the website and submit their application. It is important for us to recognize that literally thousands of Canadians have done just that, recognized that things have changed, and that this Prime Minister is committed to basing appointments on merit and diversity.

We have seen tangible results. I made reference to the 160-plus individuals who were appointed for a period of time, of whom 60% were female. With respect to the issue of minorities, we are seeing appointments that are much more diverse and we are seeing appointments that are based on merit, and that is a good thing.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I learn something every time I watch and listen to the hon. member for Winnipeg North in the House of Commons.

When we are looking at the strategy that we are working on versus the operational details, I think of our function as a governing body versus the operational body. Mr. Ian McKinnon, who is the chair of the National Statistics Council, testified to the INDU committee that it was essential for the Canadian statistics advisory council to be set up in the way that it has been, giving it independent operational control but at the same time allowing accountability.

Paul Thomas from the University of Manitoba, who served on the National Statistics Council since 1996, said that we have to look at the policy and operations split in order to have true independence, so that we can be assured that our data is not being influenced by government policy directives.

The role of the chief statistician is to work with the advisory council and also to listen to the directions coming from the minister, but knowing that he is ultimately reporting through an advisory council as an independent body.

Could the member for Winnipeg North talk to us a little about the strategic role that the government plays versus the operational role that agencies like Statistics Canada play?

• (2110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. It is important to recognize the difference between that policy role and the operations.

We all recognize the importance of Statistics Canada and the fine work that it does. In fact, I started off my comments by complimenting Statistics Canada, which is an organization that is recognized around the world for the fine work that it does. Anything we can do to make it that much more arm's length in its operations, enabling that high level of expertise that it brings to the table, the healthier and more reliable the information it gathers will be.

I have trust and confidence, as I know our government does, in the fine work that it does. By allowing the distinction, by listening to what individuals like Professor Paul Thomas, and others, have to

say, and making that difference, we will have a better collection of data, that is ultimately more reliable than what we currently have.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on my friend's comments about the Liberal approach to appointments.

It is quite evident that merely accepting applications from the public is not an open process if the results are baked in. In fact, all it is doing at that point is just leading people on and inviting them to use their time unproductively, if in fact all the government is doing is receiving these applications but then proceeding in a direction that is predetermined.

What we have seen in the way the Liberals have approached appointments, with respect to the Senate, is they have accepted applications, but then if we look at the voting record of those senators, we see less independence from their new appointees than we see from the people who were appointed as partisan Liberals.

Strikingly, on the one hand the government is defending this application process that it has for various appointments, but on the other hand there are people like Madeleine Meilleur put in place who clearly are there with a partisan background and reflecting that partisanship.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary is willing to come clean on this point, and acknowledge that what we really have is a smokescreen. There is an application process that is designed to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In order to allow the parliamentary secretary to answer, I do have to cut the member off. I am sorry.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there is no smokescreen here. It is very real. We invite Canadians to participate. I made reference to Kim Campbell as one example. There are other examples. Let us think about Malcolm Rowe, appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the comments that were put on the record by the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives will try to spin it in whatever way they want, but at the end of the day there is a substantial difference between the way in which we make our appointments, which is open to all Canadians, and the old system under Stephen Harper and the way the Conservatives used to do it.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to Bill C-36 regarding Statistics Canada and some of the changes that are being proposed.

As a member of the industry committee, now known as innovation, science, and economic development, I have had a large opportunity to study the bill and ask questions of witnesses. We received testimony in person and in written form.

Government Orders

If the bill is proceeding, Conservatives certainly have some concerns. Those concerns stem from the activity of the Liberal government to date. The government has essentially said one thing and done another. It has to do with appointments and the narrative that was proposed in terms of an objective government. We have not seen that coming from the government benches to date. I would like to go through that over the next few minutes and outline where some of these concerns lie and what we need to do to ensure they are dealt with in the future.

I try to start every speech regarding a government bill with a reading of the government's throne speech because I believe it is a good measurement to determine whether the government is reaching its mandate or following the belief system it put in front of Canadians some 18 months ago. It states:

Let us not forget, however, that Canadians have been clear and unambiguous in their desire for real change. Canadians want their government to do different things, and to do things differently.

They want to be able to trust their government.

And they want leadership that is focused on the things that matter most to them.

Things like growing the economy; creating jobs; strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it.

The problem is that what we have seen, whether out of the government as a whole or out of Industry Canada, and the innovation minister specifically, when it comes to appointments, they are not non-partisan. They are in fact some of the most partisan appointments we have seen to date. We can look at whether we are changing the 30 individuals currently on the advisory committee and reducing that down to 10, or we can even look at the actual members who have been appointed to the innovation council by the innovation minister to date.

I looked at who was appointed to the innovation council, and it is quite striking. When we look at the 10 individuals who were appointed to the innovation council we might think one is a Liberal donor, or maybe two. However, we would be wrong. Maybe it is three. No, five of the 10 individuals appointed to the innovation council are Liberal donors, and many of them have donated time after time.

At committee, we tried to take this on, to understand what the criteria were to appoint members to this council, or any other advisory board, by the industry minister. Unfortunately, these were shot down and we were unable to truly look into them.

As we look forward to this new committee of 10 individuals, we must also take into consideration the regional distribution. Currently, there are up to 30 members. They represent the 10 provinces and the territories. Unfortunately, there are going to be three of those 13 that will not have representation anymore. Obviously, this is a major issue.

Regional distribution on these advisory committees is essential. It is essential because the questions we may be asking, or the information we may be looking for, is different. We have a very diverse, broad, and large country. The questions we may want answered in Newfoundland could be different from those in British Columbia, they could be different from those in Ontario, and certainly the territories probably strike their own set of questions

they would like to see answered and data they would like to see brought together.

● (2115)

The innovation council was not the only council that was cooked with Liberal donors. We also had the Advisory Council on Economic Growth from the Minister of Finance, and obviously, we had the official languages commissioner, Madeleine Meilleur, which we saw play out in the media over the last few weeks. Certainly what we have seen to date is a government that is not afraid to put Liberals into the mechanics of government to cook the pie. The reality is, if the Liberal government bakes the StatsCan pie, it can then just feed it to the Canadian people.

There is a concern that we do not have enough separation between the Liberal government and the StatsCan job, which is going to be based on the change to the advisory council and the changes that would be brought through in this piece of legislation.

The question is what possible damage could be done based on partisanship and partisan appointments. The answer is clear. In the framing of questions, if the questions themselves and the data being requested were of a partisan nature, they could be used to influence the debates within this House and influence legislation coming forward from the government. They could be used to influence the public. The reality is that we need a complete and utter separation between the two. Unfortunately, what we have seen from this government to date is that it is not willing to hold a non-partisan tone when it comes to these types of appointments.

I will give a couple of examples. The most glaring is electoral reform. There were the questions asked by the government and the way they did it, this partisan approach to gathering data. If that type of mentality is taken into this new advisory council, I think it spells a lot of trouble for our Parliament, for StatsCan, and certainly for Canadians.

On pipelines, what questions and data could be requested and used in certain ways to influence the debate in this House? The opportunities to influence the outcome of debates using StatsCan are endless.

Certainly, when we go to tax policy and economic reform, we can see the opportunity for a partisan advisory council to influence the outcome of what is happening in this place, which would inevitably influence Canadians across the country, and not in a way we would be hoping for.

Innovation and StatsCan have had a couple of run-ins since the government took office. To be fair, one of them started prior to the government taking office. That was with the resignation of the chief statistician, Wayne Smith. Mr. Smith did not believe that StatsCan should be rolled into Shared Services Canada. He believed it so strongly that he in fact offered his resignation, which was eventually accepted by the Prime Minister.

I was reading a story a while ago. I remembered it and thought I should bring it to the House today. It is from the CBC, quoting Mr. Smith:

"I made clear that if I did resign it would be with the intention of making public my concerns. So that was my last desperate bid, I guess, to persuade the government to sit down and talk about this. Didn't work," Smith said with a smile.

I really like that quote.

• (2120)

The reality is that we have an objective chief statistician saying to the government—both the previous government and the current government, so I do not want to be seen as partisan—that this is not going to work for Stats Canada. Unfortunately, that was not listened to.

It is interesting because Australia and the United Kingdom both had changes to IT services, and the goal in all three countries was to save money by bringing all of the IT needs within the different government departments to a single place and obviously find savings, efficiencies, and a better and more effective way to deliver services. Those two jurisdictions, however, opted out. They determined it was not the right way to do business for their statistics agencies, for two reasons. Number one was objectivity. They wanted to maintain the separation between Stats Canada, which provides the data to those governments, almost the same type of objectivity we are asking with the appointments process. Second, they wanted to ensure that there was a quality of service for Stats Canada because at any point a failure of the IT support services can result in lost data, and lost data obviously results in bad decision-making or the potential for bad decision-making.

On that note, there is another quote that Mr. Smith made on this exact subject in the same story:

If you can't process the data, if we're constantly being interrupted by failures of equipment, then it's going to take us more time to get the labour force survey out, more time to get the consumer price index out.

Mr. Smith saw that there was a huge potential issue with the changing of the IT services and the potential for it to hurt Stats Canada. I am a big believer that good data leads to good decision-making. The more data we have on the important pieces and the priority pieces of any piece of legislation, any pieces of decision-making that a government is making, the better. If we have the right data, we will make the right decisions, unless partisanship comes into the equation, which is what we have seen happening a lot to date.

I also wanted to talk about privacy because there are some changes to privacy in terms of the census and information, the release of that information, when that release takes place, and how it takes place. We need to recognize that privacy is a freedom. It is a very integral freedom to our democracy, to us as individuals, as citizens. These changes are interpreted by some Canadians as an attack on their privacy, even if it is after they pass away. They do not want that information being disclosed or used for governmental purpose.

Privacy is an interesting item because it is the protection of ourselves from others in society and it is certainly the protection of ourselves from an overbearing government. I can understand that mentality because we have seen in the last 18 months the government that is willing to go from the cradle to the grave, that is willing to step into almost any area of a person's life and legislate. I can certainly understand and identify with those who are concerned about the changes to privacy within the bill.

When we were going through testimony at the innovation committee, we had the opportunity to ask many individuals and

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the newly appointed chief statistician to testify. There was a constant narrative that the objectivity and the freedom of Stats Canada was integral. It spoke directly to the integrity not only of the individuals who worked in this department but the integrity of the data being received by government departments.

• (2125)

As we are continuing to look forward and we are approaching the time when we will vote on the bill, it is important we call on the minister to appoint individuals to this advisory council who do not have any political leanings, who have not stepped into the political process. If that means those individuals are not Liberal donors, great. At the end of the day, Canadians need to believe in the processes the government puts in place to appoint its councils.

We can look back at the words I use from the throne speech up front, "They want to be able to trust their government." We have seen the way the government operate across the board, whether it is commissioners, or it is the advisory council by the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and these have not been objective, non-partisan appointments. They have been incredibly partisan.

I am open to any questions that come my way, but I will call on the minister to proceed with objective, non-partisan approaches to appointing members of the new advisory council.

• (2130)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte and I sit on the INDU committee. We have had many heated discussions and not so heated discussions, but he always comes from a point of passion.

When we were looking at establishing the need for shared services to manage the IT infrastructure behind the Statistics Canada, we had a presentation from Ron Parker from Shared Services Canada. He talked about cybersecurity and the need for a collaborative approach around it in order to take swift action when it was needed.

In March the department had a problem with an attack called "Apache". No data was lost or altered. It was able to get back online quickly. The government IT is managed as an enterprise rather than a silo.

I had an independent business in Winnipeg. I joined business with a company in Saskatoon that had a larger enterprise management, larger server management. It was a benefit to my business to let it manage the software and hardware so I could manage my business.

Could the member across the aisle comment on the possible benefits to having a centralized system?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, I get the member's point, but the reality is that some facets of government need to be maintained for democracy's sake, and this is one of those. The institution that gathers the data, that interprets the data, that delivers the data to the House of Commons, to Canadians, to the government, needs to be seen as completely separate from that government. Certainly this is my point of view.

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The question was about the benefits of bringing those services together, IT services across the board. What the member has heard in my speech is this. Other governments with very similar democracies to our own, in fact ours is based on one of them, did not proceed for this specific reason. We need to maintain the objectivity. We need to maintain the separation between church and state, between those who gather the data and those who use the data.

That message needs to be heard by the Government of Canada. This is not a situation where it is just about savings. The reality is that data, if it is done properly, can provide far more savings in the end than just this shared service.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, I want to bring to the attention of members, and I just found out myself, that our lobby coordinator, Sean Murphy, will be getting married on Saturday. I hope all members will join me in wishing him eternal happiness.

I would like to ask my colleague about the issue of the appointment process.

Members of the government have assured us it is fine because it is an application process. We do not even know where those applications are going or the people who apply for government appointments. Maybe they go straight into the shredder. It seems the overwhelming majority of appointments by the government have been very partisan in nature.

Could my colleague tell us whether he is in any way comforted by the assurances from the government that people can at least put in applications?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, I would certainly like to echo the member's congratulations to our lobby coordinator.

The proof is in the pudding. I feel like I am on a food thing today; I might be hungry. If we look at the innovation minister's appointments to the advisory council on innovation, one of the individuals heads up MaRS in Toronto. From what the Liberals have talked about, this place will receive funding for the new supercluster innovation fund the federal government has brought forward.

The government appointed an advisory council and that advisory council was full of Liberals who also sat on a place that was hoping to receive funding. Then the fund was created for \$950 million, of which they would take advantage. That is the type of thing we have seen from the government so far. It is a complete conflict.

Do I believe that will continue? Probably. That is one of the reasons we need to ensure the minister commits that this new advisory council will not go down the road of Statistics Canada, where it has gone through with the advisory council on innovation.

• (2135)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thought the points my colleague made were great. I wonder if he would develop a bit the broader questions around the government's lack of willingness to apply a genuinely scientific lens to the policy decisions it makes?

We repeatedly hear this rhetoric around science-based policy. However, we can look at the way it has set out the process around pipelines. The northern gateway pipeline went through a review process and then the government threw it out even though that did

not accord with the science and the information. We have talked about its approach to marijuana. Even its approach to fiscal policy does not reflect any kind of economic science to say we can run budget deficits in perpetuity.

Would the member agree that there is a real dissidence between the government using this kind of bumper sticker about evidence-based policy when in reality it is making all kinds of decisions that are so obviously at odds with the evidence?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, the Liberals are using a form of scientific method. It is political science. They are really not basing it on any evidence they gather with respect to data, except polling data. This is a serious concern. If we look at the material we are speaking about today, this is where the data is collected. This is where all the information is brought together, delivered to the government, delivered to Canadians, and, through that, decisions should be made. Unfortunately that has not been happening.

I would not want to see the government then cook up the advisory committee to determine what evidence it will see down the road.

I certainly agree with the member. I would call on the government to actually do what it has said with respect to following the science.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan raised the issue of pipelines on a few occasions and talked about science. One only needs to understand and appreciate basic math. Basic math says that the Conservatives did nothing with regard to science in 10 years. In fact, when it came down to the pipeline issue, they got zero inches built to tidewaters. That is just basic math. Forget about the science.

Could the member opposite provide some sort of an explanation as to why the Conservative Party ignored the issue of science for many years? That was best illustrated when Harper got rid of the mandatory census form?

Mr. John. Barlow: You should change you talking points. You should try and actually do some homework.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I want to bring member for Foothills to order. If he happens to have something to contribute, I would expect him to stand to ask questions or to comment.

The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Madam Speaker, I would not want to put words in the mouth of the member for Foothills, but I think he would say that the last government did ensure pipelines were constructed, did get through rigorous processing, did ensure we followed all the evidence, did ensure we were environmentally aware, did ensure the economy was paramount, did ensure jobs were at the forefront, and did ensure the interests of Canadians were followed day in and day out, not some political bent we have heard on the other side of the House.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I again want to remind members that they should not be having discussions back and forth. Therefore, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the hon. member for Foothills should restrain themselves from having those debates. If they wish to do so, they can attempt to get on the list to make speeches.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

● (2140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it would be good to have a bit more French in the House. Therefore I will be giving my speech on Bill C-36, an act to amend the Statistics Act, in French.

The main purpose of this bill is to strengthen the independence of Statistics Canada. At the same time, it proposes to modernize certain key provisions of the Statistics Act, in accordance with the expectations of Canadians. One of these provisions is the part of the act that deals with imprisonment.

The government recognizes the importance of high-quality statistical data and the need to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to encourage Canadians to provide information to Statistics Canada. However, the government also recognizes that Canadians should not be threatened with jail time if they fail to complete a mandatory survey, including the census.

We are not alone in thinking that this is excessive in the current context. Generally, Canadians agree that prison time for refusing to complete a mandatory survey or grant access to information is a penalty disproportionate to the offence. This is excessively heavy handed and inappropriate. That is why Bill C-36 would abolish imprisonment as a penalty for those who refuse or fail to provide the information requested as part of a mandatory survey.

The bill also abolishes imprisonment as a penalty for those who wilfully obstruct the collection of this information. In other words, once this legislation is passed, no Canadian citizen will be threatened with jail under the Statistics Act for failing to complete a mandatory survey. As a general rule, people complete the census questionnaire and all other mandatory survey questionnaires well before legal action is taken.

Statistics Canada has a thorough process that it follows before sending cases to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. First, Statistics Canada sends a letter to the individual and has someone visit their home. Statistics Canada does everything in its power to remind people of their civic duty before referring their case to the justice system.

Typically, with each census, approximately 50 cases are referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada and the Department of Justice. Of those cases that proceed to court, the majority are resolved with the person agreeing to complete their census form when ordered by the judge. Among those cases that go to trial and where the accused is found guilty, the vast majority result in a fine.

Only once has a person ever been sentenced to jail; this occurred in 2013, after one individual refused to complete the 2011 census of

population and refused other offered penalties such as community service.

The only household survey that Statistics Canada conducts on a mandatory basis is the monthly labour force survey. Statistics Canada has never referred a case to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada for this survey.

All of Statistics Canada's core business surveys are conducted on a mandatory basis. Since the 1970s, Statistics Canada has not referred a single case to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada for a business that has refused to comply with the act. The only time a census of agriculture case was referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada was in conjunction with failure to comply on the census of population.

Since 2010, a number of bills have been introduced in Parliament to remove imprisonment for such offences. Some may argue that removing the threat of imprisonment would increase the risk that more Canadians would choose not to respond to an information request from Statistics Canada, thereby affecting the quality of the data. However, it is important to note that the current fines will remain. The fines are fully consistent with the provisions of the Act. Also, Canadians are aware of the importance of the data produced by Statistics Canada.

We are of the view that the threat of imprisonment is not required to convince Canadians of the importance of providing information for mandatory surveys. Canadians also know and understand that Statistics Canada is a highly regarded institution, one of the best in the world, and that it values and protects the confidentiality of all data collected. With the changes we are proposing to the legislation to strengthen the agency's independence, Canadians can be further reassured that their data will continue to be treated with the highest levels of professionalism, integrity, and confidentiality.

● (2145)

That brings me to another point. In the past, some people have said that, since we rarely use the provisions regarding imprisonment, it does not matter if they are removed from the act or not. We disagree. It is important that the penalties set out in the Statistics Act are in keeping with the collective vision of Canadians. Prison sentences should be reserved for more serious crimes. I think the House will agree with me on that. Let us be responsible, fair, and reasonable and eliminate that threat. That is what Bill C-36 seeks to do.

I would also like to talk a little about the rest of the bill. In 2010, the government's decision to replace the mandatory long form census with the voluntary national household survey gave rise to public criticism. Concerns were raised about the quality of the national household survey data and about Statistics Canada's independence.

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In reaction to this decision, a number of private members' bills were introduced in the House that would require the collection of information by means of a mandatory long form census questionnaire that was equal in length and scope to the 1971 census.

We seriously considered that option. Instead of focusing only on protecting the census, we chose to amend the Statistics Act in order to give Statistics Canada more independence over its statistical activities. To that end, we gave the chief statistician decision-making power over statistical operations and methods. The bill also seeks to add provisions on transparency to ensure greater accountability on decisions.

This approach aligns with the United Nations' Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the recommendation of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development on best practices. Some might still be wondering why we would not enshrine the content of the census in law to prevent future governments from replacing the mandatory long form census with a voluntary questionnaire, as was the case during the 2011 campaign. The answer is simple: no legal provision can prevent a government from changing the content of the census.

Governments have the power to make and change laws, but more importantly, we must remember that official statistics are a public good and that Statistics Canada is a publicly funded institution. It is ultimately the government's responsibility to determine the scope of the statistical system, specifically, the country's data priorities, or in other words, the data that is collected. This responsibility ensures that the statistical information collected is sensitive to the burdens placed on citizens as respondents, that it is sensitive to the costs they bear as taxpayers, and that the information that is produced is responsive to their needs as data users.

Statistical data must also be responsive to the government's need to make evidence-based decisions about the programs and services that affect the daily lives of Canadians, such as affordable housing, public transportation, and skills training for employment. Rather than entrench the content of the long form census questionnaire in the Statistics Act, Bill C-36 addresses the fundamental issues of Statistics Canada's independence. Let me explain why.

First, the previous government's decision about the 2011 census was not about the questions to be asked, but rather about removing the mandatory requirement to respond. The voluntary national household survey, as it was called, asked the same questions that would have been asked in the planned mandatory long form questionnaire that it replaced.

Consistent with our government's commitment to evidence-based decision-making, one of our first acts as a government was to reinstate the mandatory long form census in time for the 2016 census of population to ensure that the census produces high-quality data. We also committed to strengthening Statistics Canada's independence and ensuring that the methods of operations are based on professional principles. Bill C-36 meets this commitment.

Second, entrenching the content of the census in law could reduce the government's flexibility to ensure that the data collected continuously meets the needs of an ever-evolving Canadian society and economy. We just have to look at the history of census content.

● (2150)

It has changed numerous times to reflect emerging issues, evolving data needs, and the development of alternative ways of collecting the information.

The first national census of Canada was taken in 1871 and contained 211 questions, including those regarding age, sex, religion, education, race, occupation, and ancestral origins.

Subject matter and questions have been added and dropped ever since. In 1931, questions on unemployment were added. In 1941, questions on fertility and housing were introduced. In 1986, questions were introduced on functional limitations. In 1991, questions about common-law relationships were introduced, and questions on same-sex couples were added in 2006. In 1996, questions on unpaid work were introduced. These were removed in 2011.

These examples signal the need for flexibility and prioritization in determining the content of a census. Entrenching census content in legislation would limit this flexibility. Amending the act every time the census needs to change would be highly impractical.

Our current approach to determining census content works. It is based on extensive user consultations and the testing of potential questions to reflect the changing needs of society and to ensure the census is the appropriate vehicle to respond to them.

Then Statistics Canada makes a recommendation to the government on the content that should be included in the upcoming census. General questions are then prescribed by order by the Governor in Council and published in the *Canada Gazette* for transparency purposes.

Lastly, defining the long form census content in law could potentially reduce the incentives to find alternative means to gathering census information at a lower cost and with less respondent burden.

Statistical agencies must also think about the burden that they impose on citizens and businesses to provide information, and they must do so within the fiscal resources allocated by the government.

The data world is evolving rapidly. We read and hear the words "big data", "open data", and "administrative data" every day.

More and more statistical offices around the world are integrating these alternative and complementary sources of information into their statistical programs.

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They offer the potential to collect and publish high quality statistical information more frequently, at lower cost, and at lower response burden.

For example, for the 2016 census, Statistics Canada obtained detailed income information for all census respondents from administrative records provided by the Canada Revenue Agency. This approach will ensure that higher quality income data will be produced at a lower cost and with reduced burden on Canadians.

Entrenching the scope and content of the census in the Statistics Act may not serve Canadians well moving forward. It would tie us to one way of doing business that may not be the way of the future.

The act should remain flexible to meet the evolving data needs of Canadians and their governments. It should retain the flexibility to encourage innovation so as to take advantage of the evolving means of collecting statistical information.

Some have suggested that the census content should be the same as it was over 40 years ago and that the sample size for the long form should be entrenched in law.

The rapidly evolving world of data suggests that we should retain the flexibility to build the foundation of a statistical system of the future rather than restricting ourselves to continue to do what has been done in the past.

We think our approach to Bill C-36 strikes the right balance and will stand the test of time.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked the members of the government a question that I do not feel received a clear answer, so I will see if the member can answer in a little more direct way.

There is a pre-existing advisory mechanism associated with the statistical decisions that the government makes. That would be eliminated and replaced with another advisory mechanism with almost the same name. The only obvious difference is that the number of members would be reduced, which Conservatives have some concerns about, but beyond that, a mechanism would be created by which the government could now reappoint the members of that body.

We have heard all kinds of attestations from government members about how committed they are to making good appointments, but it is rather fishy that this change would effectively allow the government, without making many other substantial changes, to reappoint the entire membership of this body.

Does the member really think that if he were in opposition, he would not have objections to a government that proceeded in that way, doing away with one body to replace it with almost identical one, thus allowing itself to reappoint members? Would he really accept that if he were not a member of the government?

• (2155)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I do not see a problem. When a system is modernized or upgraded and there is continuity of people, it seems perfectly reasonable to continue using them. If the processes need to be modernized, which was a good part

of the speeches, how do we make sure the whole system is flexible enough to keep up with the times? It seems perfectly appropriate. I do not see the issue that the member is bringing forward.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, the bill we are discussing is about Statistics Canada's independence. The main threat that we have seen to Statistics Canada's independence recently was the lack of IT support from Shared Services. That is what prompted former chief statistician Wayne Smith to resign.

It seems to me that this bill does not address that problem. As I noted in a previous question for the member for Winnipeg North, the budget implementation bill does contain some provisions for the minister responsible for Shared Services to provide exemptions so that certain government entities could get IT services from other places. However, the government operations committee has been told that this exception will not be provided to Statistics Canada. It will still have to go through Shared Services.

I am wondering if the member could let us know what the government plans to do to ensure that Statistics Canada receives the IT support that it needs in order to fulfill its independent mandate to conduct research and provide the evidence and data that we need to make good public policy.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, Shared Services Canada, as the member knows, is of particular interest to me, as I served briefly with him on the government operations and estimates committee. The idea of consolidating our databases and systems and so forth was, in principle, a good one. I do not think it was particularly well implemented by the previous government, and it had quite a few problems, as we have seen, going forward.

Personally, I think it should be using a whole lot more open source offers. That is my personal opinion. I think this issue needs to be addressed.

While Shared Services Canada got off to a bad start, it will improve with time. It has no choice but to improve with time to properly address the issues of Statistics Canada and every other department that depends on it. There is always room for improvement. As the Prime Minister always says, better is always possible.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is a late hour, and I thought some Stephen Leacock would be appropriate. Stephen Leacock once wrote, "In ancient times they didn't have statistics, so they had to fall back on lies." However, that applies to nobody in this place, obviously.

I want to ask the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle if he does not believe, as I do believe, that it is a mistake. I realize that Shared Services can be improved, but the most knowledgeable people we have talked to in the process of looking at Bill C-36 believe that Statistics Canada should have its own information system and should not have to overlap with Shared Services Canada. There is only mischief that will come from that.

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Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I am not entirely sure how to respond. I do not know the details of how the networks are set up, but a properly run IT system will provide the appropriate firewalls within their systems to prevent data from going where it is not supposed to go. That is the whole purpose of having a high-security system. If security is the issue, then we need to address that issue properly, but Shared Services has an obligation to provide every department with the properly protected systems they need.

• (2200)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Laurentides—Labelle and I are both fans of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and we know that any statistical answer is 42.

We had a presentation at the industry committee from Mel Cappe, from the University of Toronto, on April 6. He talked about statistics being a public good. This is a gentleman who served in the public service for over 30 years, under seven prime ministers. He said that statistics are a public good, that they should minimize coercion, and that the intrusiveness of questions should not come from partisan politicians.

He looked at the changes of governance, and he said they looked appropriate. He said that it was a much-needed cleanup on the governance of Statistics Canada.

Could the hon. member either comment on *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* or on Professor Cappe?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is always appropriate at this hour in this place.

The member will know that I recently learned that the reason Douglas Adams picked 42 as the answer to life, the universe, and everything is that 42 is the ASCII code for an asterisk, which is a wild card, which means it can represent anything one wants it to. However, if that is used in statistics, the end result is a whole lot of bad data.

Making sure that we are using good data for everything we do is critically important lest we end up in the improbability drive and have no idea where we land.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member said that better is always possible. I think that would apply to his answers as well. I am going to try one more time here.

The member referenced *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Perhaps the improbability drive is the best explanation for the way in which the Prime Minister responds during question period. He kind of plugs whatever in, and gets whatever out.

Can the member come back to the question that I asked previously? If one body is replaced with another, there is effectively no meaningful change, but simply a matter of being able to reappoint all the members of that body. The member sort of obliquely referred to progress and flexibility, conveniently ignoring the fact that the new oversight body is meaningfully the same as the previous one. There is no new flexibility associated with that, surely.

Better is always possible. Perhaps the member will have a better response this time.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, perhaps if the member does not want to see it as an improvement, he could just follow the trend line to see where it is going.

It does help move things forward. When we make changes and put the same people back and continue with the work, progress is important.

Mr. Erin Weir: Madam Speaker, in response to my question about the relationship between Statistics Canada and Shared Services Canada, the member suggested that Shared Services will get better over time.

In the meantime, does the member think it is reasonable to allow Statistics Canada to procure IT services from other sources that are currently able to provide them?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I think it defeats the purpose of Shared Services Canada if we start getting all the departments back in their own systems.

We went from 460-odd data centres to seven for a reason. If we start undoing that work, we will not be making progress. It will make things more complicated, take longer to fix, cost more money, and make no meaningful progress. As I said before, if we really want to fix the issues that are being brought up, proper firewalling and proper administration of the systems will address the problems.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, what a nice crowd tonight, to say the least.

[*Translation*]

It is with great pleasure that I rise tonight, at 10 p.m., to speak to Bill C-36 before such a large and prestigious audience. I know that I am not allowed to say it, but I am pleased to acknowledge the presence of the member for Papineau on this Tuesday evening at 10:05 p.m. It is hard for me to believe, but he is actually here. I am pleased to welcome him just like all other members of the House of Commons who are present and listening carefully to what we are saying.

Bill C-36 concerns the Statistics Act, in other words our approach to statistics, and the changes that the Liberal government wishes to make to it. I will quickly point out the circumstances surrounding the Statistics Act, which has been amended in recent years, the changes made to it, what the various political parties have said, and lastly, the fact that the Liberal government has introduced this bill that, in our opinion, includes provisions that are not favourable to Canada's future.

I would like to point out that in 2010-11, the Conservative government made major changes to statistics, specifically the Canadian census. Our government decided to change the approach. We decided to change, in a fairly major way, the mandatory long form census and replace it with the national household survey. Everyone who witnessed this debate will remember the public outcry. Everyone said that it was the end of the world, that it made no sense, that from then on we would never be able to come up with proper statistics, that it was a direct attack on Canadian science, and that we would be paying for the Conservative government's mistake for a long time, for decades, if not centuries.

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However, what was the outcome? Let the experts speak for themselves. Wayne Smith, then chief statistician, said that the “National Household Survey produced a rich and robust database of information.”

All those who said that what the Conservative government had done made no sense were confused. It was Mr. Smith himself who said in *The Globe and Mail* on June 24, 2013 that “It’s irresponsible to try and dissuade Canadians from using what is an extraordinary rich and powerful database. To make them nervous about that is I think irresponsible.”

I will have a lot to say about so-called fake news shortly. Some people seem to think fake news is a pretty new thing, but that is not true. As a former journalist, I know what I am talking about when it comes to the spread of false information. I have seen it happen as a journalist and as a politician, especially during the 2015 election campaign, when Canada was a victim of one of the worst smear campaigns against its international reputation. One particular bit of fake news tarnished its reputation for 24 hours. I will have more to say about that later.

Anyway, there were allegations that the Conservative government’s infamous survey was a disaster and that people would stop filling out their census forms. The numbers speak for themselves, however: in 2011, 2,657,000 households with a total of exactly 6.7 million people participated voluntarily. That was 9% higher than for the 2006 census, which captured 2.4 million households representing 6.1 million people.

Everyone who said that the Conservative government’s changes spelled disaster for science and education and that the impact would be felt for decades was wrong. As it turned out, more people participated, we had more data, and we ended up with a robust corpus of relevant information. What the previous government did was the right thing to do.

Now this government has introduced Bill C-36 to make major changes to the Statistics Act. I want to highlight two elements of Bill C-36, which would establish a Canadian statistics advisory council and no longer require the consent of respondents to transfer their census information to Library and Archives Canada. The second element is the one that concerns us most.

● (2205)

Let us start by talking about the Canadian statistics advisory council. As Bill C-36 proposes, this council will be made up of just a few people who will have sweeping powers and who will not reflect the Canadian reality. That is our concern.

We would like to see at least 20 or so people be included on this advisory council. Such a council should be all about consulting. Yes, that is a lot of people, but when it is about listening to people, in order to understand Canadian diversity and ensure that every region of Canada can have its say, of course it takes a lot of people. That is why our party proposed an amendment at committee that this government unfortunately rejected.

Did this government plan to appoint a small number of people to this advisory council for the same reason that it seems to be doing everything else for nearly two years now? Is this another new cushy

job for friends of the party, depending on how much they donated to the party?

Need I remind the House that this government is a disgrace to the appointments process? We saw the sorry episode regarding the official languages commissioner, a noble, important, and rigorous position that must be respected and above all, that must have the moral authority to be brutally honest about the government’s reality, without ever jeopardizing the credibility of that very strong institution, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Sadly, the current Liberal government has sullied this approach by giving a consolation prize to a lifelong Liberal who donated to the Liberal Party’s coffers and the current Prime Minister’s leadership coffers. She wanted a job in the Senate. The Prime Minister’s chief adviser said, “Sorry, we no longer give partisan appointments to the Senate, but we have something else.” He could appoint her to a totally neutral and objective role and make her official languages commissioner.

That was just wrong and as a result of the immense pressure from the official opposition and others as well, after three weeks of the government’s sorry figure skating display, Madame Meilleur finally realized that she might not be the best Liberal around to fill the role of commissioner of official languages.

Let us come back to Bill C-36. As I was saying earlier, this bill seeks to remove the requirement to gain the consent of respondents to transfer their census information to Library and Archives Canada.

We believe that is a direct attack on what is most precious to our fellow citizens: their freedom of expression, especially in relation to who they are, what they represent, and their personal data.

In its new obsession to want to know everything and disclose everything, the government is suggesting, through Bill C-36, that now people will no longer have the privilege of saying yes or no. They will be required to hand over information. To us that is not at all the way to go about conducting a statistical survey. This needs to be voluntary, especially when it comes to disclosing personal information. We cannot just pretend that this is nothing and that we can just hand over this information like it were no big deal.

This calls for extreme care and vigilance. The bill also repeals imprisonment as a penalty for any offence committed by a respondent. That makes no sense to us. We urge the government to be more careful.

We believe in the importance of statistical data, but people must be able to participate voluntarily, proactively, and openly. It should not be mandatory, and people certainly should not be forced to do it or face sanctions. We can learn from the past here. In 2011, people said the statistical sky would come falling down, but the fact is that more Canadians, 9% more, participated than in the previous census. The evidence tells us that was a good way to go.

Government Orders

That is why we fundamentally disagree with Bill C-36 as written and urge people, especially the government, to be extremely careful

Earlier, I mentioned fake news. I mention this in the context of statistics because, during the debate in 2010-11, lots of people said this would be the end of the world and everything would break down.

• (2210)

Finally, the Chief Statistician of Canada acknowledged that no problems had been reported. On the contrary, response rates increased.

Must I remind the House that Canada's international reputation was terribly tarnished in August and September 2015, in the middle of the election campaign? Members will sadly recall that, when a three-year-old child was found dead on a beach in Syria in the midst of the refugee crisis, some malicious and particularly dishonest people spread the information that the child ought to have been in Canada because his name was on the list of refugees but the government had dragged its feet. In the end, none of it was true. Unfortunately, the child's name was never added to any list. His father did not do it.

Unfortunately, for 24 hours, dishonest and malicious people viciously spread the information that the Government of Canada forgot this boy in Syria. That was completely false. For 24 hours, our country's international name was dragged through the mud. This was one of the worst cases of fake news that I have ever seen. It was unbecoming of journalists and politicians to stoop so low as to use this terrible tragedy in their political games.

Regardless of who was the head of state at that moment, the child unfortunately lost his life and his name was never on any list because his father decided otherwise. That is why we have to be careful. It is important to keep statistics because it is a matter of numbers, and if anyone has trouble with numbers, it is our friends opposite. Must I remind the House that they completely lost control of the public purse over the past 18 months? They got elected by saying that they would stimulate the economy by running small deficits for three years and then magically balancing the budget in 2019. That is another number that is set out in black and white in the Liberals' election platform on which they won a majority.

I hear applause. Do I need to remind those applauding that they have forgotten their promises? What are the facts? Do we have a modest \$10-billion deficit? No. Canadians have been saddled with an astounding three times more debt than that. The Liberals were elected on a solemn pledge to run modest deficits, but the fact is, their deficit is three times bigger than they promised. They also said Canada would balance the books in 2019, which is an election year. They said they would right the ship and that Canada's budget would be balanced in 2019.

Just two days ago, who did we hear on Global saying that he had no idea when Canada would balance the books? Who said that on Global on Sunday? The member for Papineau, the current Prime Minister of Canada. How sad.

Honestly, this is the first time in the history of this great land that a Prime Minister has admitted to having no idea whatsoever when the federal budget would be balanced. If I should happen to be

misleading the House, please, somebody stand up and give me a date. Canadians want a date. They want to know when the government will balance the budget. Nobody knows. The member for Papineau, an honourable man if ever there was one, got himself elected on a promise to balance the books in 2019. Look at that. I see him nodding. Does he need a reminder about the document that got him elected? The Prime Minister seems to have some doubts about ever having mentioned modest deficits and a balanced budget. I would like to remind him that, on page 73 of the Liberal Party platform, it says, "the federal government will have a modest short-term deficit of less than \$10 billion".

However, he is doing precisely the opposite. We do have a number and date for returning to a balanced budget. It will be in 2055. These numbers did not come from the Conservatives, foreign observers, the Prime Minister, or Liberal MPs. They came the very people who do this kind of thing day in, day out, the senior officials at the Department of Finance.

• (2215)

If there is anyone that knows how the government's finances are doing, it would be officials at the Department of Finance. What does it say in the Department of Finance document released last December? It says that if nothing changes, and it looks as though nothing will change with the current Prime Minister, we will return to a balanced budget in 2055.

There is a nice story that goes with that. The Minister of Finance received this very report from his officials as early as October 5. The Minister of Finance, an honourable man whom I respect, left the report on his desk and did not release it until December 23. While Canadians were preparing their turkey dinner for Christmas, the Minister of Finance released an incriminating document confirming that the government had lost complete control of public spending. They thought it was no big deal and that no one would notice. Thanks to a vigilant opposition and an alert press, the truth came out and we proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that these people have completely lost control over public finances, which is totally unacceptable.

Need I remind the House that when we run up deficits, we are leaving our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to foot the bill, to pay the price for the current government's mismanagement? I keep hearing the Prime Minister and all the cabinet ministers say over and over during question period that the government is investing to create wealth for our children. The problem is that our children will pay the price. The government says it is family friendly. Well, it must feel close enough to the family to send the bill to our children and grandchildren, because it does not know how to manage the country's finances. It is absurd.

Government Orders

I heard the Prime Minister on Global television say with a straight face that he had no idea when we would return to a balanced budget. That is completely irresponsible. I asked the Minister of Finance a completely frank and straightforward question based on his extensive and impressive experience as a seasoned executive. I want to reiterate that I have the utmost respect for the Minister of Finance. He served in his family business admirably and grew the business that his father started himself. Well done. I am very proud to have a man of that calibre as our Minister of Finance. Still, it would be nice if he made some good decisions.

Earlier, during question period, I bluntly asked him, when he was in the business world, in the private sector, whether he would have tolerated an associate laughingly telling him that he did not have any idea when the budget would be balanced and that it was no big deal. When the Minister of Finance was a Bay Street baron, would he have allowed one of his associates to behave in such a way? He would have shown him the door. It is unacceptable.

Unfortunately, it was the Prime Minister who made those disrespectful comments. I say disrespectful because it is disrespectful to our children and grandchildren who, sooner or later, will have to pay for this government's mismanagement. Over the past year, our party held its leadership race. We had serious, rigorous, positive, and constructive debates, and we came out of that leadership race even stronger than before.

Our current Leader of the Opposition, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, said that he got into politics to become the leader of this party because he did not want his children to have to pay, like his generation is paying for the Prime Minister's father's mismanagement. What happened in the 1970s when the government completely lost control of public spending is unfortunately happening again. We have seen this before. Canadians deserve better than that.

All that to say that Bill C-36 is a bad bill. This bill to amend the Statistics Act reminds us of the sad fact that this government has no idea how to carefully control public spending.

• (2220)

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise at this late hour. However, I am having trouble talking with the shouting going on.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. It is nice to see everyone having a good time. Order.

I will defer back to the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I have trouble getting a question out of that speech, but I thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for giving us a tour around some very disturbing thoughts.

We had started the evening talking about Bill C-36. One of the things about the bill is it shows a legitimate role for politics, but not for partisanship. We have to look at what is best for the country.

When we look at partisanship we get things like we had in the member's speech, which really do not apply to statistics. When we are looking at the governance of Statistics Canada, we need to separate this House from that House, otherwise that is what we get.

Could the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent tell us what the role of Statistics Canada would be, in his mind, in terms of an independent organization.

• (2225)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to apologize, because I am a bit tired. I just slept three hours last night, and I have been on duty since 10 o'clock this morning. I am very tired, and I am sorry if I am not very enthusiastic tonight.

Let me talk about Bill C-36. When we change a Canadian government institution, it is quite important, and it is based on facts and based on problems. That is why 10 years ago, our government decided to fix the situation with a new way of getting information from people, and we had strong and robust results. More than 90% of Canadians participated in that survey. Everything was good at that time.

Why does the Liberal government want to change that? The Liberals want Canadians to provide their personal information to the bibliothèque du Canada. We have to be very careful when we ask people to give personal information. That is why we are concerned about those two issues in Bill C-36. That is why we hope the government will fix it with new policies, good policies, that are good for Canada and good for Canadians.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent covered quite a bit of ground in that speech. I would like to pick up on the beginning of his speech and the last answer.

I am wondering if he could clarify for the House whether it is currently the position of the Conservative Party that the long form census should not be mandatory.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I just want to emphasize the fact that this hon. gentleman is a great-grandson of the former opponent of the Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker when he was elected in Saskatchewan. I study history, and that is why I pay so much attention to that kind of situation. We all know that the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker was the first guy from Saskatchewan to become prime minister. The next one is right here on our side of the House.

Let us talk about the question. Why change something that is running well? We have proof, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that contrary to what all those so-called experts said about it killing the statistics and killing the science and all that stupid stuff, the reality is that more people participated in the survey.

Why change something that is working? Why fix something when everything is working well?

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could speak to the lack of answers we are getting from the government about the change in the form of its statistical consultation body. I refer to the comments of the Treasury Board president. It is clear that this is not in its proper form in terms of the transition that is happening. The previous body was providing a role similar to the new body, but the new body would essentially allow the government to reappoint these people. It would give the government much more direct control over appointments and weaken its independence.

Adjournment Proceedings

I wonder if the member thinks we should have confidence in the government when it comes to its appointment processes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Unfortunately no, Mr. Speaker. I have no confidence in the government, because it has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt in the last 18 months that when it tries to fix something, it creates more trouble. We have seen that with the government when it is time to administer public money. The Liberals said they would have a small deficit, but they have a huge deficit. The Liberals have lost all control over the spending of Canadians' money, and this is very dangerous for us, for our children, and for our grandchildren, who will have to pay for the bad judgment of the government. Based on that and based on so many other issues, we are afraid when the government tries to fix something that it will not be good.

Let me also point out that tonight really is a Saskatchewan evening, because not only is the NDP member from Saskatchewan but the member who asked the question is from Alberta.

An hon. member: He is from Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I said that I was tired, Mr. Speaker. Tonight I am tired. He was born in Saskatchewan. I knew I was not wrong.

• (2230)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the hon. member's interventions in the House, especially when he is particularly tired, as he is tonight. It is even more entertaining than usual.

Perhaps if he wants to look back at former prime ministers, he needs look no further than where his riding gets its name: Louis St. Laurent, one of the greatest prime ministers ever. I commend anyone to take a look at the statue in front of the Supreme Court when they have time to kill between now and when we go home for the summer.

Why does my hon. friend keep saying it was a success after 2011? Statistics Canada deemed it an absolute failure. It had to give warnings on the results: use the results at one's own peril because it could not guarantee their validity. How does he think that is a successful database for Statistics Canada to use? It did not work, it was a failure, and that is why we are here today. That is why one of the first things we did was reinstate the long form census. We are improving it even more with Bill C-36.

I know when the member is not so tired, he will come around to his senses and support Bill C-36.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, now it is becoming quite interesting to see my friend from Newmarket—Aurora, who speaks so well and so much, and who I do appreciate.

If he cannot believe what the Conservative MPs have to say, I hope he will respect the fact that the one person who was in office at that time said:

[*Translation*]

Wayne Smith, the chief statistician at the time, said that the national household survey “produced a rich and robust database of information.”

Then, in an interview published in the June 24, 2013, edition of *The Globe and Mail*, Mr. Smith said that it was irresponsible to try to dissuade Canadians from using an extraordinarily rich and powerful database. That is not a Conservative talking. He added that he believed that it was irresponsible to make them nervous about using it, and yet that is exactly what the member for Newmarket—Aurora just did. It is not a Conservative who said those things. It is the former head of Statistics Canada, who, I might add, resigned because of the pressure being exerted on him by the current government.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora talked about the name of my riding and the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent. One of the items of great importance that the Louis St. Laurent government did was cancel the deficit. I hope the current government will get inspiration from the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this may be too sober a question for this hour. One of the critiques I brought to committee, as I tried to get amendments on this bill, was to improve the independence of the chief statistician, particularly around the way in which that person is appointed. I do not know if any of those concerns resonated in the Conservative caucus.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I want to pay all my respect to the member, the leader of the Green Party, which plays an important role in our democracy, and especially in the House of Commons. I had the privilege to work with her on the electoral reform committee, another deception from the government.

Based on that, yes, we strongly think that the head person of Statistics Canada should be independent from the government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the motion carried.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as midnight.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2235)
[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls want justice, but they also want to be heard. Shockingly, the inquiry commission only lists 90 names, as opposed to the 4,000 that the Native Women's Association had identified as murdered and missing indigenous—

Some hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, can we get some respect here? We are talking about lost sisters.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): One moment, please.

Quieting down the House works very well. We will let the hon. member continue.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The families of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls want to be heard. The government has made solemn commitments, as we all have. We want the inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls to go well. We want the families to be heard. We want to get resolution to the reason so many were lost, to the reason that so many families have not been willing to put their trust in police.

The inquiry commission's last count only listed a couple of hundred names of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. The RCMP thinks there are 2,000. The Native Women's Association of Canada has counted more like 4,000.

On National Aboriginal Day, which is starting tomorrow, we honour the families left behind and the women and girls lost, but we have a long way to go to achieve closure for the families who have suffered through the loss or disappearance of a loved one.

Indigenous women are disproportionately the victims of violence, including murder. Indigenous women are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-indigenous women. Indigenous women make up 4% of the female population, but they make up the majority of missing and murdered women.

The suspicion around the reason there are so few names in the inquiry website is that there are privacy and process concerns. We have talked with the minister about whether the government is in fact doing everything it can to get those files transferred over, but it has not been totally clear.

Over the past few weeks, the minister has said, "We are confident that the commission has the tools, the resources, and the networks to ensure that voices of families are heard and that they have the support they need." However, that is not what we are hearing the families and survivors saying.

During the pre-inquiry process, there were 17 face-to-face meetings with more than 2,000 survivors and their families, as well as the front-line service providers. The RCMP says there are 1,200

women and girls, but the inquiry has really just a handful in comparison.

Dawn Lavell-Harvard, when she was the president of the Native Women's Association, said that the names of the missing women were in fact shared with the Liberal cabinet ministers during the pre-inquiry phase, so my question tonight is this: why is there such a discrepancy between the data that we know the government has and what has been given to the commissioners?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for the opportunity to reaffirm the government's commitment to ending the ongoing national tragedy, recognizing that I do so on traditional territory of the Algonquin nation on the eve of National Aboriginal Day in Canada.

Our government is committed to ending the ongoing national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We are the first government to recognize that this is indeed a tragedy. We have launched a truly independent inquiry that is completely national in scope. We are confident that the commissioners have the background, the experience, and the mandate to lead this inquiry properly.

After decades of loss, discrimination, and mistreatment, families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls are speaking, and they feel they are being heard.

The minister was very pleased to see the positive feedback from the first sessions that were held in Whitehorse. An independent national inquiry operating free from direction or interference of the government, and I want to make that clear, we know was essential to keeping our commitment and a vital step toward reconciliation with indigenous people.

In the context of the member's question, I would remind the House that the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was established under part I of the Inquiries Act. It is independent from the federal government. This commission has the authority to determine how best to accomplish its mandate. The commissioners decide how, when, and where to hear from witnesses, including survivors, families, and loved ones.

The purpose of the pre-inquiry engagement, which included 17 face-to-face meetings with one or more federal ministers, was to hear primarily from families, loved ones, and survivors about the design of the inquiry. The pre-inquiry gathered recommendations and feedback on issues such as who would lead the inquiry, who would participate in the inquiry, and how it should be conducted to help inform the design of the commission. All of the 5,272 submissions received from academia, government groups, indigenous organizations, individuals, members of Parliament or legislatures, and organizations were all shared with the commission so it could read what families, loved ones, and survivors really wanted, and to be able to inform the inquiry and to accomplish the goals that it has been tasked with.

Adjournment Proceedings

In sharing the information with the commission, we have been equally aware of the importance of respecting the wishes of the many individuals who participated in the pre-inquiry phase on the condition that their participation would remain anonymous. In these instances, no personal information was shared. During the pre-inquiry, the department also assisted in areas such as making travel arrangements and keeping registration lists.

I want to assure the member that progress is being made. We are committed to ensure that this is done, and it is done properly and in an independent way. I ask for her support in this ongoing inquiry.

• (2240)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's hope for the inquiry and hope that also maybe she would be able to get me clarification that she did not have tonight on the exact number discrepancy. Because this is a nation-to-nation commitment that the government has made, it is ultimately the government that is responsible for ensuring that it go well, for all of us, our shared responsibility in this House that it go well.

I want to quote from a very critical piece in *Maclean's* magazine. It says:

In their reports on the Canadian human rights crisis of murders and disappearances of indigenous women and girls, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found that Indian Act sex discrimination is one of the root causes of the murders and disappearances. It is a matter of life and death.

I also note Sharon MacIvor having said that the consequences of keeping women unequal are known and they should be unacceptable to all Canadians: stigma, exclusion, second-class citizen status, and the risk of violence.

Can the member describe to me the government's position around how sex-based discrimination—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, as the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith already knows, today we debated Bill S-3 in the House, which would make changes to the Indian Act with respect to sex-based discrimination. We are encouraging members to support those amendments, and we are hopeful that they will, as Bill S-3 goes through the House.

As well, the government, under the direction of the minister, has said it will enter into a phase-two process to review other gender imbalances and discriminatory clauses that exist within the Indian Act and to make those changes.

I also want to ensure the member this evening that the Government of Canada continues to support the commission on missing and murdered indigenous women to the extent possible within the law. We are committed to bringing an end to the cycle of violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada. We are not waiting for the recommendations of the inquiry to act; we are already—

• (2245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a follow-up to my question earlier about the 911 communications system in Nova Scotia.

Currently, as members know, there are two main facilities in Nova Scotia that deal with 93% of all ambulance, fire, and police emergency calls, dispatching the RCMP and so on. One of these facilities is in Truro and the other is in Dartmouth. They are an hour apart, which provides for redundancy. In the event that something happens in Dartmouth, then the Truro office can pick up the load, and if something happens in Truro, the Dartmouth office can pick up the load, which is providing that necessary redundancy.

Recently, the RCMP has suggested it may close the Truro office and move it to Dartmouth where the other police communications centre is located. I was concerned at first because of the jobs, but lately I have become aware that it is a safety issue as well.

Through access to information, I was able to access a report that the RCMP did, which states, “It is not recommended that the two largest police communications operations in Nova Scotia be placed within the same metropolitan area.” That is exactly what the RCMP is proposing to do.

The RCMP report goes on to say, in recommendation number three, that the RCMP “not locate their primary OCC within the Halifax Regional Municipality.” Again, that is exactly what it is proposing to do.

The same report goes on to say that the primary service delivery site should “be outside of HRM due to risks of placing two largest police communications centres in proximity to each other.”

This is about redundancy. Therefore, there should be a separation between the two centres so that, in the event something happens in Dartmouth, Truro could pick up the load and vice versa.

I went a little further because I needed to know more about this. I did not want to say anything that was not accurate. Therefore, I contacted one of the major police forces in Canada and I asked what it used as a manual for emergency measures. It referred me to the Homeland Security manual that it uses. This police force serves seven million people. This is from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA. It confirms exactly what the RCMP report said. It states, “Organizations should have adequate, separate locations to ensure execution of their functions.”

That same police force also provided me with another report from the National Emergency Number Association. These are reports that this police force and most police forces in Canada use to set up their emergency measures program. The report says that the document is prepared solely for the use of 911 system service providers. It states, “It is desirable to have at least two layers of redundancy for each major component of...[an emergency services office].”

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Here we have three reports saying that to consolidate these emergency measures communications centres into one municipality puts Nova Scotians at risk. In fact, in this case, they would both be located in Dartmouth if the RCMP goes ahead with this. The decision has not been made yet. Hopefully, it will not make that decision, because this is the opposite of what everybody else is doing. It is reverse redundancy. Most places are going for redundancy and trying to make sure they have separate locations for their communications. If the RCMP does this it would be reverse redundancy and will put Nova Scotians at risk. The word “risk” is in the RCMP report.

Therefore, my question is this. If the RCMP decides to contravene and contradict its own recommendations, who would be held responsible in the event of a disaster when life and limb are lost?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his incredible advocacy on behalf of his community, and for raising this issue at this hour.

The RCMP contract relationship has a long history in our country, dating back as early as 1906. Nova Scotia became the first contract jurisdiction in 1932, and for the past 85 years has received exemplary service from the RCMP through what is known as H Division.

The contract relationship sees participating provinces and territories pay 70% of RCMP costs and the federal government pays 30%. Municipalities with populations of less than 15,000 pay 70% of the costs, while the federal government pays 30%. For larger municipalities, the city pays 90% of costs. Finally, since 1991, municipalities that have never before been policed by the RCMP must pay 100% of the contract policing costs. Under the contracts, it is the provinces and municipalities that establish the level of policing, budget, and policing priorities in consultation with the RCMP.

That brings me to the issue raised by my hon. colleague. In terms of the consideration to consolidate the Nova Scotia emergency communications centre, the force is currently conducting a review to examine service delivery as well as facility and human resource requirements across Nova Scotia, not only in the location we are speaking of tonight. Before any decisions are made, the RCMP is committed to reviewing all aspects of the proposed consolidation to ensure the safety and security of Nova Scotians, and the brave women and men of the RCMP.

The current RCMP H Division study will determine what is required to sustain or upgrade the operational communications facility over the next one to five years. It will primarily focus upon operational needs, employee health and safety concerns, and the anticipated costs for the next five to 10 years.

The Treasury Board Secretariat sets out requirements for custodial departments to manage real property, and deputy heads are accountable to their respective ministers and Treasury Board for the management of their assets. Departments are now being audited on their footprint, the amount of space they occupy, and are required to make repayment for excess space in their buildings.

The goal of this study is to engage employees in contributing to decisions relative to their work site, while being operationally minded and fiscally responsible for the assets the RCMP manages moving forward. At the end of that review, the recommendations will be presented to the Nova Scotia divisional executive for a decision of how to best proceed given the overall priorities of H Division.

I understand the member has been in frequent contact with the executive at H Division. I commend the member for his dedication, and for raising this issue of importance to his constituents. I assure the member that no final decisions have been made prior to the review's completion, and I look forward to working with the member on the issue.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to commend the brave men and women of the RCMP who continue to put their lives on the line every single day to keep our communities safe.

• (2250)

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, there is no question about the quality of the policing service we get, but there would be a question about the quality of the police service we get if there were no way for them to communicate with each other, which would be the case if both of these communication centres were shut down.

When I brought this up last week in the House, I asked about it, and was told that our own police force here, that provides us with protection, is arranging for an offsite location away from this location, so they would ensure redundancy in the event of a disaster after what happened with the armed gunman. Communications actually failed in that case, because there was no way to communicate.

Again, we have three reports all saying that redundancy is so critical. Our own House is saying redundancy is critical. Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that redundancy is a critical part of this decision, not just money?

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, this is clearly a decision that is beyond money, and it is one that is incredibly important. In fact, it cannot be overstated that in policing, effective operational communication is vital to our safety and security. The systems and infrastructure public safety officers use, without question, have to be top-notch, and those investments are absolutely critical.

I look forward to working with him. No decisions have been made on this, but it is an incredibly important issue. The safety of his community, the safety of Nova Scotians, is a top priority for this government.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight to revisit a question I raised on May 4. I asked the Minister of National Defence why the Liberals were taking away the danger pay from our troops that were currently deployed in the fight against ISIS and were stationed in Kuwait at Camp Arifjan. We had already established that the Minister of National Defence had a very casual relationship with the troops.

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We heard from veterans not only on the minister's embellishment of his service record, but also the feeling of service members and their families on the impact it had on their moral state of mind, as they served in the Canadian Armed Forces, knowing the government was trying to undermine their danger pay.

A 27-year veteran stated, "The Defence Minister cannot continue to lead the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, having lost the and respect and trust in this way."

I acknowledge that the danger pay issue was resolved. After opposition members and Canadians put so much pressure on the government, it had to backtrack. The government was forced to accept a motion I brought forward in the House to restore the danger pay for all troops that were in the fight against ISIS, including those that were stationed in Kuwait, particularly at Camp Arifjan. We know the embarrassment was so much that the Liberals had to insert it into the defence policy review.

Today I want to deal with the track record of the Minister of National Defence over the past year. We have heard from members of the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as veterans, who took great offence with the minister's comments that he was the architect of Operation Medusa. This was not a slip of the tongue. This was something he said from prepared notes in a speech he delivered in India on April 18. He said that on his first appointment to Kandahar in 2006, he was the architect of Operation Medusa. He said it in 2015 as a Liberal candidate.

To show how it impacted upon our veterans and our troops, retired Lieutenant-Colonel Shane Schreiber said that the minister, as a soldier, probably would not have said that, however, the minister the politician thought he could get away with it. He said, "When you are careless with your words as a politician, that can haunt you." He went on to say, "Any good soldier would not try to steal another soldier's honour." This is often referred to as stolen valour.

The minister has apologized for that statement, but he has undermined his own credibility because of this statement, which was deliberately misleading not only the House but Canadians and the people he spoke to in India.

We also know he has misled the House on a number of other occasions.

He also said that the pulling our CF-18s from Operation Impact in the war against ISIS was accepted by our allies. He said in December, 2015 that he had not had one discussion about the CF-18s. However, emails sent by officials, which we acquired through an access to information request, showed that the Iraqi minister of defence was clearly focused on Canada's decision to withdraw its CF-18s from the coalition air strikes, asking the minister to reconsider this decision on numerous occasions.

We also know that on numerous occasions, Kurdish officials stated that they wanted to have our CF-18s left in the fight against ISIS, but the Liberal Minister of National Defence brought them home.

We also know that over the past year, the minister has also dealt with this whole issue of—

● (2255)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's original question had to do with pay for our troops who are deployed to Kuwait to fight against Daesh as part of Operation Impact. The member opposite also mentioned the Minister of National Defence in his speech.

I am pleased that he has given me an opportunity to reiterate that the minister is a former reservist who has an excellent understanding of the needs of soldiers and their families and who believes that our troops are by far our greatest asset. He is a minister who puts his experience on the ground, his expertise, and his energy into serving our men and women in uniform every day. He is a minister who ensures that our soldiers have the resources, training, equipment, and support they need to successfully carry out the missions and operations assigned to them.

Like the minister, our entire government is determined to ensure that the members of the Canadian Armed Forces get all the benefits they need to take care of their families here in Canada, particularly when they are sent on missions abroad.

That is why we supported the motion moved by the member opposite last March regarding tax relief for military personnel sent to Kuwait. That motion was debated on March 9, 2017, and was adopted unanimously in the House.

The Minister of National Defence became personally engaged in this file in February 2016. On May 18, the Minister of National Defence announced that we would be offering tax relief to all Canadian Armed Forces members who take part in international chief of the defence staff named operations, up to the highest rank of lieutenant-colonel. This change is retroactive to January 2017. In addition, this measure does not affect the hardship allowance, risk allowance, or deployment allowance set out in the National Defence military foreign service instructions. Those payments will continue.

Our women and men in uniform who take part in overseas operations are doing a tremendous job. They are highly skilled and very well trained, and are the pride of Canadians from coast to coast. They represent Canada with professionalism and courage, and we are very grateful to them.

Our new policy includes several measures to ensure that our troops get the support they need whether they are transitioning from civilian to military life or back to civilian life at the end of their career.

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We put our troops and their families at the heart of this policy by making sure they get the care, support, training, and resources they need to accomplish what we ask of them. The government's new defence policy includes a new vision and a new approach to defence. We provided a clear direction on defence priorities over a 20-year horizon and provided matching long-term investments to fully fund the implementation of our new policy.

The government set out an ambitious but realistic plan to ensure that Canada can respond to current and future defence challenges. Over the next 10 years, annual military spending will rise from \$18.9 billion to \$32.7 billion. The size of the regular force will grow by 3,500, and the reserve force will be increased by 1,500. We will also invest to grow, maintain, and upgrade Canadian Armed Forces capabilities.

The Minister of National Defence is deeply committed to our troops, and the new defence policy reflects that commitment.

● (2300)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, we are not questioning the minister's record. We are questioning his trustworthiness. Case in point, the sole-sourcing for 18 Super Hornets where the capability gap is imaginary. We already know that 88% of defence experts and 13 former Royal Canadian Air Force commanders have said there is no capability gap.

We have already seen \$12 billion worth of cuts in two budgets under this minister. The government has done a defence policy review, but there is no money to actually resource it. If there is no money to resource it, then it is a book of empty promises.

The minister has been out there doing his tour. Canadians and members of the Canadian Armed Forces are hoping it is his farewell tour, because this is a minister who has gone out, and tried to sell something when we know the money is not in the budget. The Minister of Finance has said that currently the Canadian Armed Forces are properly provisioned. I can tell the House the money is not there to do the things the government says it is going to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, in a context of complex and unpredictable international security, Canada has to anticipate new threats and new challenges, adapt to the changing context, and act with decisive military capability.

I want to point out that the minister chaired the most important consultation in years in order to develop Canada's new defence policy. His unwavering passion contributed to the plan for Canada's protection, North America's security, and the commitment related to maintaining stability in a constantly changing world for the next 20 years.

As the Chief of the Defence Staff said when the new defence policy was unveiled, this is a good day for people in uniform. Canadian Armed Forces members are happy with the Minister of National Defence and they respect him. That is abundantly clear on the ground. I have seen it many times.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:04 p.m.)

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