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(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 21, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 21, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon. Geoff Regan (Speaker of the House of Commons, Lib.): I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner on the application of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and the Privacy Act. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled "Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks, 2007". Done at Nairobi on May 18, 2007. An explanatory memorandum is included with this treaty.

* * *

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by concerned citizens across the country concerned about Canadian citizen and academic Hassan Diab, who was extradited to France in 2014 in a case widely viewed as a wrongful conviction in the making. He has been detained since then in France for questioning based on anonymous intelligence allegations, possibly gleaned from torture. In 2016, a French judge found consistent evidence supporting Hassan's innocence, concluding that he could not have been present in France at the time of the crime, and in May and again in October 2016, the judge ordered

Hassan's release on bail, finding no grounds for his further detention, yet he has been jail or on electronic monitoring for over eight years.

These citizens are calling on the government to do everything it can to obtain Hassan's release and return to Canada, and to intervene with the French authorities to act as soon as possible.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

EXPORT AND IMPORT PERMITS ACT

Hon. Mélanie Joly (for the Minister of Foreign Affairs) moved that Bill C-47, An Act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code (amendments permitting the accession to the Arms Trade Treaty and other amendments), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that regulating the international arms trade is essential for the protection of people and human rights. This is especially true for control and regulation that aim to prevent the illicit trade of arms.

Government Orders

The Arms Trade Treaty is about protecting people. It ensures countries effectively regulate the international trade of arms so that they are not used to support terrorism, international organized crime, gender-based violence, human rights abuses, or violations of international humanitarian law. Our government is committed to advancing export controls as a means of reducing the risks that come from the illicit trade in conventional arms. Joining the ATT, which calls on all of its state parties to set up effective export controls, is the next important step in advancing these export controls and reducing these risks.

[Translation]

Joining the Arms Trade Treaty will put Canada back on the same page as its closest partners and allies. Canada is the only NATO ally and the only G7 partner that has not signed or ratified the ATT.

[English]

The Arms Trade Treaty was negotiated in response to growing international concern about the direct and indirect consequences of the global arms trade on conflict, human rights, and development.

[Translation]

The goal is to ensure that all states take responsibility and rigorously assess arms exports. States must also regulate the legal arms trade and use transparent measures to combat illicit trade.

[English]

We recognize that unregulated or illicit arms transfers intensify and prolong conflict, lead to regional instability, contribute to violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, and hinder social and economic development.

Indeed, the proliferation of weapons, and particularly of small arms and light weapons, is one of the greatest security challenges faced by the international community. Armed conflicts affect civilians. Women and children are too frequently targeted or are innocent victims.

The consequences of illicit or irresponsible flows of conventional arms also go beyond the immediate threat of death, injury, or violence. Proliferation and illicit weapons trade contribute to a climate of persistent fear and insecurity, which undermines socio-economic growth and stability.

The Arms Trade Treaty has an important role to play in addressing these issues. Canada must be a leader in this effort, and we must lead by example.

The ATT represents the first time that the international community has agreed to a legally binding and global commitment to control exports of conventional arms. It sets a high common standard for export of arms, and seeks to eliminate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms.

States acceding to the ATT must assess the risk that an export might be used negatively, including for human rights abuses or to contribute to organized crime. This is not always black and white. It requires looking not only at the state as a whole but also at who will take possession of the weapon, their track record, the risk that the weapon could be diverted from the purpose intended when it was exported, and other similar factors.

• (1010)

[Translation]

The ATT also requires states to consider mitigation measures to address identified risks. This treaty is very clear. If there is no way to ensure that a given export will not pose a serious threat to human rights or be used to violate international humanitarian laws or perpetrate international terrorism or crime, it must be forbidden.

[English]

Therefore, Bill C-47 would further strengthen Canada's existing processes in relation to the global movement of arms. Our changes, including those to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty, will make Canada's export control system even more robust, and will ensure a continued high standard for addressing the pressing issue of arms proliferation around the globe.

[Translation]

Canada's existing export control system complies with 26 of the 28 provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty. In that sense, some changes are needed to bring Canada into full compliance with the two articles of the treaty where we fall short, namely, article 7, export and export assessment, and article 10, brokering.

One of the things the bill before us does is introduce the necessary legislative changes to ensure that we meet our ATT obligations.

Article 7 of the Arms Trade Treaty establishes common, clear, and rigorous standards regarding the factors that states must take into account before authorizing the export of any items subject to the ATT. These factors include an assessment of the potential that Canadian exports could be used to commit serious violations of human rights law or international humanitarian law, as well as the potential that the exports could fall into the hands of criminals or terrorists.

The ATT is the first arms control treaty that focuses specifically on the issue of gender-based violence and violence against women and children, issues that are very important to our government. These criteria are designed to ensure that Canada assesses the risks associated with the export of a given product or piece of technology regarding the intended end use and end user.

Bill C-47 will also ensure that Canada can fulfill the stipulations of article 10 of the ATT, which requires that every state regulate brokering. Brokering captures the transfer of arms without an export permit. The provisions of the bill ensure that Canadians who arrange the transfer of arms between a second and a third country follow the same rules as those who export arms outside Canada.

Regulating brokering activities will give our government the ability to monitor the activities of individuals and organizations that serve as intermediaries between arms dealers and the end users of military goods.

•(1015)

[*English*]

Moreover, these brokering permit requirements would also apply extraterritorially, meaning they would apply to Canadians engaged in brokering activities abroad. This additional capability will allow us to have a better idea of the types of brokering control list transfers involving Canadians that occur globally and to bring a greater level of visibility on potentially high-risk transactions brokered by Canadians.

Our government intends to go beyond the standards set by the Arms Trade Treaty and ensure that brokering regulations cover not only the conventional weapons covered by the ATT but also military articles and dual-use items that are likely destined to a weapon of mass destruction end use.

Requiring permits for brokering would ensure that comparable levels of scrutiny would also be applied to brokering activities. As a result, Canadian export permit authorities can better assess the risks of potential arms transfers before they occur to determine their suitability, and to deny a permit for such transfers where there is an overriding risk of the negative consequences of one of the export permit criteria, including the risk of serious violation of international human rights law or international humanitarian law.

[*Translation*]

I would like to point out that there is a legitimate role for brokers who arrange or facilitate sales for reputable arms manufacturers. Unfortunately, there are also those who do not act responsibly and who choose instead to profit from the sales of arms, even though they know that they will fall into the wrong hands.

Internationally, there are far too many cases where unscrupulous arms dealers put profits ahead of human life. Transactions facilitated by those dealers have given rise to the transfer of firearms to conflict zones, in direct violation of United Nations firearms embargoes, and to terrorist or criminal groups. This legislation will make it possible for responsible Canadian dealers to hold permits and conduct legal activities. It will ensure that those who choose to act unethically will also end up acting illegally.

Beyond the changes required by the ATT, the bill will enhance Canada's export and import controls by addressing the issue of penalties imposed on individuals who try to circumvent Canadian law and regulations. The bill will increase the maximum fine for a summary conviction offence from \$25,000 to \$250,000 for any offence under the Export and Import Permits Act. Increasing the maximum penalty underscores the seriousness of these offences that contribute directly to destabilizing accumulations of weapons and technologies in conflict zones around the world.

[*English*]

Let me reiterate that these new measures would ensure that our government will be better able to pursue bad-faith actors and hold them to account. At the same time, Canada would be in a better position to review bona fide arms transfers to legitimate end-users. Canada would also be able to effectively penalize those who would try to circumvent these processes.

Government Orders

I would like to make it clear that Canada's accession to the Arms Trade Treaty does not and would not affect domestic ownership of firearms or Canada's domestic firearms laws and policies. The ATT would govern the import and export of conventional arms, not the trade in sporting and hunting firearms owned and used by law-abiding Canadian citizens.

•(1020)

[*Translation*]

However, the ATT does not limit the number or type of arms a country can sell. The ATT simply requires states to establish rigorous export controls of the kind that Canada already has in place to ensure that exports are not put to unforeseen harmful use.

The ATT is not a one-size-fits-all system. It recognizes that states' export control systems must meet their national needs. It does not prevent states from including expedited processes in their export control systems, as Canada does for close allies, such as the United States.

The government will ensure that exports are assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in the ATT and that they do not violate the prohibitions in the treaty.

[*English*]

Turning now to the Export and Import Permits Act and to the Criminal Code, we have indicated to Canadians that our government is committed to strengthening Canada's export controls with respect to military and strategic goods and technology. This bill and our commitment to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty are part of our promise to increase the rigour of Canada's export-control system. As members are aware, Canada already has a robust export control system. We are a key member of a number of export control and non-proliferation regimes that allow us to exchange information on trends in arms movement and on best practices with our allies.

In addition, Canada has a strong sanctions regime that includes sanctions related to the export or sale of arms. Canadian sanctions are part of a multilateral action. They reflect the work we do in concert with our allies. Sanctions are implemented in Canada through the United Nations Act or the Special Economic Measures Act.

Canada has its own financial intelligence unit with respect to illicit financing of arms. The mandate of the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada is to facilitate the detection, prevention, and deterrence of money laundering and the financing of terrorist activities. Our government is taking steps to ensure that these new obligations do not unduly hinder or restrict legitimate transfers of military, dual-use, and other strategic items that are aligned with our national interests and do not pose undue risk.

Government Orders

It is the government's intention to apply the ATT assessment criteria not only to those goods specifically outlined in the ATT, but also to all dual-use, military, and strategic goods. Our government will also apply the ATT assessment criteria to both export and brokering permit applications. We will thus exceed the standards set by the ATT, and strengthen our export control system at the same time. Indeed, our government intends to see Canada establish a particularly high standard when it comes to gender-based violence and violence against women and children. The fact that this issue was included in the treaty is a clear sign of the power of advocacy by states like Canada who are determined to address gender-based violence.

While this is given less attention and consideration in the ATT than other criteria, Canada intends to propose including gender-based violence in the regulations, applying a higher standard, and assessing the risks related to gender-based violence to a broader set of exports than those defined within the ATT. These new measures would ensure that our government is better able to pursue bad-faith actors and hold them to account. Canada would also be better able to effectively penalize those who would try to circumvent these processes.

Canadian businesses would still be able to conduct legitimate transactions in pursuit of Canadian strategic and defence interests and the strategic interests of our allies.

Finally, these changes would allow Canada to meet its international obligations and accede to the ATT. I encourage all my colleagues here today to seek to advance this bill rapidly so that Canada can once again take its rightful place with its international partners as a state party to the Arms Trade Treaty.

• (1025)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the Conservatives were in government, this agreement was something that came before us. I was the parliamentary secretary for public safety, and I did a lot of work prior to that on behalf of law-abiding gun owners. In Canada, we have seen situations in which law-abiding firearms owners have been erroneously and unfairly attacked by previous governments. We worked really hard to ensure that law-abiding gun owners who follow the rules, are licensed, and are using their guns for legitimate purposes are not made into criminals.

We have a problem with this treaty because there is no language in it that protects law-abiding gun owners, specifically here in Canada. I did not hear my colleague talk about that. He talked about how they would like to protect law-abiding gun owners and that it does not affect legitimate gun owners, but the language in the treaty does not address this.

Why are the Liberals ready to ratify an agreement that has the potential to hurt millions of Canadians using firearms for legitimate purposes and who could be targeted if Canada does ratify this agreement?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, if we go back and listen to the speech I just gave, we will see in the blues a specific reference to the question raised by my colleague across the way. I will repeat it in case she missed it.

To reiterate, I would like to make it clear that Canada's accession to the Arms Trade Treaty does not and would not affect domestic ownership of firearms or Canada's domestic firearms laws and policies. The ATT governs the import and export of conventional arms, not the trade in sporting and hunting firearms owned and used by law-abiding Canadian Citizens.

This party stands up for law-abiding Canadian citizens. This party committed to acceding to this treaty. This government understands that this treaty will in no way affect domestic ownership of firearms.

This red herring, this phony argument made by the opposition, will not stand with this government. Canadians want us to take international leadership while at the same time standing up for the rights of law-abiding Canadian citizens.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member whether Bill C-47 brings all U.S. destination military goods included in section 2 of the Arms Trade Treaty within the Export and Import Permits Act as required by the ATT, and if not, why not?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, what is important about the ATT is that it recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all system that countries who accede to it need to adopt. It meets the needs of all states and allows for the use of expedited procedures for low-risk countries, similar to the system we have in place between Canada and the U.S. As well, it recognizes that we have a deeply integrated military procurement and production system, and that where there are low-risk countries and there is not a one-size-fits-all system, countries can accede to this treaty and meet the standard.

I reiterate that in this standard we are going to exceed in many ways the standards set by the ATT while continuing to be productive and allow industry to meet Canadian interests, and the interests of our close and trusted allies.

Government Orders

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, after listening to the parliamentary secretary's speech, my question, although not congruent with what is written in the bill, is the following. Does he understand that the requirement for exporters or importers to retain records in a specific electronic file is for a period of up to six years, and that it must be made available to the ministry upon its request at any point in time to create an automatic firearms registry? The information has to contain all of the particulars pertaining to the sale, the import, and the export of any firearm. As well, it is more onerous than dealing with the firearm alone. It would also include all scopes, optical sights, and anything that would be associated with the sale of the firearm, including all hunting rifles, and so on. This is an onerous burden that will be placed on the backs and shoulders of businesses selling firearms in Canada. There is only one firearm manufacturer in Canada, which means that every other firearm that a hunter or a sports shooter uses comes from outside Canada. If it becomes so burdensome that these businesses no longer wish to import these firearms, or if our one domestic firearms creator is so burdened by this that it is not willing to export any more, it will have a detrimental impact on the hunting and sports shooting communities, and on the farmers I represent who use these firearms as tools in their daily business.

Can the parliamentary secretary clarify his remarks, and be consistent with what the bill actually says?

● (1030)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, I have been consistent twice now. The Conservatives have demonstrated that they want to raise this phony argument and to fearmonger about our accession to this treaty.

Let me make it clear that accession to the Arms Trade Treaty will in no way affect domestic gun ownership in this country. It will in no way put any restrictions on law-abiding Canadian citizens. It does not deal in the trade of sporting and hunting firearms.

We expect to get this sort of rhetoric from the other side. However, we have committed to acceding to the Arms Trade Treaty and know that it is in the best interests of Canadians. We will continue to work to ensure that Canadian industrial interests are met and will work with our allies around the world to regulate the international trade in arms.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could expand on what we believe Canadians expect the government to do on this very important issue. As the Conservatives obviously are trying to attempt to mislead Canadians, what is important here is Canadians' desire for this government provide strong leadership. Why is it so important for Canada to play this leadership role?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, for 10 long years Canada had a policy of isolation and exclusion from the rest of the world. Canada has endeavoured, since this government has come into power, to reassert its leadership role in the world, to espouse Canadian values, to be a good partner in areas where we can aid in development, to aid in governance around the world, and also to work with our allies to ensure that we have a just, peaceful, and secure world.

Canadians expect this government to take a leadership role in ensuring that the highest standards are met in the international trade in arms. That is what this bill and our accession to the Arms Trade Treaty will accomplish. It will ensure that the minister undertakes to review a significant set of criteria before issuing permits. It will increase fines for people who contravene these rules.

Let me reiterate that in no way will it affect domestic firearm ownership in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are delighted that Canada has decided to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. However, I have talked to a number of experts about the government's bill to implement the treaty, and they all agree that it is a big disappointment. It is nothing but a hollow shell.

I would like to know if the government is open to amendments in committee to really give this bill some teeth so that it respects not only the spirit but also the letter of the treaty.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Our government believes that committees should be independent and manage their own affairs. I look forward to the debate that will be held there if this bill is passed at second reading and referred to committee.

As I mentioned several times in my speech, we believe that, by allowing us to accede to the treaty, this bill will establish high standards that Canada will exceed. I am also sure that we will have a healthy debate about this when the bill is sent to committee.

● (1035)

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to debate Bill C-47, particularly after the speech from the parliamentary secretary, which ended with incorrect information to this place in response to the question from the member for the NDP. Actually, Canada would be worse off than it was before. He said that this would send Canada ahead with respect to the aims of the treaty. That is not only incorrect on the factual review of the treaty itself, but it shows the parliamentary secretary's lack of understanding of our current arms control regime in Canada.

Therefore, for his benefit, and for the benefit of the few of my Liberal friends listening, I will take him through that.

The bill is part of the Liberals' election promise to implement the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty, the ATT, which has been debated in the UN, has been brought forward, and signed by some countries but not by others.

Government Orders

My remarks will focus on four key points. Three of those go to the inferior nature of the ATT when compared, side by side, with what Canada does now, and did do under the previous Conservative government, the Liberal government previous to that, and so on, back to the 1940s. I will give three points on how it is inferior and a final point on its inherent unfairness, lack of clarity, and over breadth.

First, this is inferior to what Canada does now under the Export and Import Permits Act and the regulations and orders in council that can be brought forward by government under that legislation. I hope the parliamentary secretary will take notes, because he will need to research this after I go through some of it.

The first point I make is on the Trade Controls Bureau.

We empower a department of the government, and have since the 1940s, to ensure that military equipment sales, issues related to security, crypto logical equipment, and nuclear biological risks are not only governed and tracked but are controlled. We have a bureau already, not in New York, in Ottawa, that has been doing this very effectively for many years. The Trade Controls Bureau has been empowered and does this for each Parliament. I would invite the member to look at the Trade Controls Bureau and see how we specifically address, track, and control trade in military equipment, other items of security, or other interests. All Parliaments have done it. Both Liberal and Conservative governments have done it.

My second point is that we specifically name, from a Canadian point of view, items for export that need to be tracked and controlled. I will review what those are for the member because they are called out specifically.

Military or strategic dual use goods, so some goods that can be used for a military or civilian purpose, are specifically tracked. Other items are nuclear energy materials and technology; missile related technology; chemical or biological goods; and crypto logical equipment and code breaking, particularly in the age of the Internet. Many companies in Canada are world leaders in this technology, like SecureKey and others. We already monitor, control, and, in many cases, restrict export of these technologies.

One problem in the past that we know of was that a previous government, the government of Pierre Trudeau, had some issues when nuclear technology was traded for peaceful use and was tracked, but unfortunately may have been used to develop capabilities with respect to weaponized use of that technology.

I use that as a point of reference to show how, over many Parliaments, Canada has done this. We did not wait for the United Nations. Had we done that, it would have been a bit of a lawless west. As a responsible parliamentary democracy, Canada has been doing this.

I invite the member to review the specific items controlled under the Export and Import Permits Act that we charge the Trade Controls Bureau to monitor.

•(1040)

My third point on how our existing system is superior to an inferior UN treaty is the tracking.

The items I just outlined, including military equipment, cryptological, nuclear, and biological, are tracked by both the Canada Border Services Agency and by Statistics Canada, and not just under our own reference points. We use the World Customs Organization tracking figures for these items. We track and limit the trade in these items far more than what the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty does.

An article in *Ceasefire* magazine calls the UN's ATT a failure. The third item it tracked was its lack of transparency. There is no tracking internationally under this treaty. Canada already does it.

I hope the parliamentary secretary rewrites the notes the government has been passing around on the bill, because they do not accord with our legislative record or Canada's responsible treatment of controlled technologies, including not only military but nuclear technology as well.

Canada was the fourth country to have controlled nuclear fission. We have 70,000 people in Canada that work in this area. Our CANDU technology is the best in the world in capability and its safety record. We have taken this very seriously since the 1940s and we track according to the World Customs Organization tracking codes for each of those items.

I have a fourth point at which I would invite the Liberals to look.

Right now, we have what is called an area of control list under the Export and Import Permits Act. That empowerment in the bill, through an order in council, can specifically limit sales of anything to a country. Right now the only country on the area control list is North Korea, and it is probably very good it is on there. I would agree with the government if it wants to keep that country on the list. In the past, the area control list has included Belarus and Myanmar.

Not only do we already have a system of controls, tracking, and itemization that is far superior to what is proposed in the bill, our legislation as it stands in Canada can ban a country entirely. That is a tool the government can use if it is about control of anything, not just our controlled items that I have said are tracked.

The cabinet is charged with making decisions on why countries should be removed from that list. As Myanmar opened up, it was removed from that list. It was the same with Belarus. However, we still have to track. We see problems in Myanmar right now with respect to Rohingya. Perhaps the civilian oversight of the military is not quite as it would seem.

The Liberal government has within its power now, not by the United Nations treaty, to limit entirely sales to a country. I would invite the parliamentary secretary to review that.

Government Orders

Finally, like many UN treaties, the main players are not part of the treaty. In global arms trade, there are six countries called the “big six”. Three of those countries are not part of this treaty. I am not worried, because Canada's regime, as I have been describing to the House, is superior to this treaty.

The treaty came as an election promise by the Liberals, but I want them to see that what Canada is doing now, and has been doing responsibly, is superior. If we want the UN to have the tracking, to have the transparency, we should be pushing to have these discussions before a treaty is brought forward. Many MPs on both sides of the House want to ensure that Canada adheres to its Export and Import Permits Act, so they need to know what a good job it is already doing.

Finally, another inferior and quite frankly short-sighted part of the UN ATT is article 5, which would suddenly include the Department of National Defence into the military equipment provisions of that treaty, preventing, or in some cases limiting, government-to-government transfers. We have never had to catch DND within our own export and import permits regime, because DND is the government. It is a crown ministry. It is part of the crown.

● (1045)

Therefore, if we want to do military-to-military aid, perhaps sending training materials to the peshmerga that our special forces are working with and training, this measure would encumber that process. I am quite sure that most Canadians believe that DND is responsible for its own equipment. Why then would we catch them in a treaty that most groups are calling a failure anyway, which does not involve three of the big six players in terms of the global arms trade?

Finally, I have listed five or six items demonstrating that what Bill C-47 proposes is actually inferior to what Canada is already doing.

The last item is about unfairness, and this where the politics of it come in. Just as we are seeing with small business, there is no consultation on concerns about overbreadth or the fact that hunters, sport shooters, or recreational users under a regulated regime of lawful firearm use could be caught within the confines of the measures in this bill. I have placed this last because, while the parliamentary secretary insists it is not the case, all industry groups insist it is, but without consultation, how does the parliamentary secretary know?

It is clear that he does not understand the export and import permit regime. Maybe he knows a little more about it now, which I think is part of why we have debate now in the House of Commons. It is to show that regulation in Canada is in many ways superior to what is done anywhere else in the world, including the United Nations. Before we even talk about what the UNATT does, we should talk about what Canada is doing already, and whether it is insufficient to limit and track items that we consider potentially dangerous: military equipment, nuclear technology, chemicals, biologicals, cryptology, or anything that could adversely impact our national interest.

On the last point, the cryptological sales, we have seen the current government green-light sales to China of pretty much any technology out there. I would suggest that some of these technology trades occurred without the proper oversight, without the full review

that is normally done. For some reason those reviews were waived in the case of one of the most recent sales to China. Those reviews are important, because technology is actually the threat of the future to the public safety and security of Canada and our allies, and Bill C-47 does not address that.

As I have said, particularly on my third point on transparency, this treaty is inferior. Civil society groups out there have called this treaty a failure, particularly because of its lack of transparency, and as I said, our Trade Controls Bureau has been empowered for two generations to track the sale and control of goods that Canadians deem important.

On that final note, this hearkens back for me, as a member of Parliament for a suburban riding that has a rural element, to the lack of consultation on the last element, on which Canadians have genuine concerns about whether their lawful and regulated use of a firearm for hunting or sport shooting could be impacted. The parliamentary secretary uses the words “phony argument” when we suggest that. I would invite him to go hunting with someone outside of Fredericton and see if they are being phony about their concerns. What we need is consultation to see if my concerns are overinflated or if the parliamentary secretary is being dismissive. I am not suggesting that I know, but as a lawyer, I will tell members that overbreadth or lack of clarity in law is a failure in itself.

The last government made interventions with respect to the negotiation of this treaty on many fronts, and one was a simple and reasonable carve-out of regulated civilian firearms use. I do not know why that was not pursued by the UN when there is zero transparency. However, as I said, fortunately our existing regime has transparency, while this treaty has zero.

● (1050)

While things were watered down as this was negotiated by the United Nations, while three of the big countries that are actual players in global trade are not part of this regime, while those issues were going through the negotiations, a simple and effective carve-out of the legitimate, historical, and cultural use of firearms was not carved out, for whatever reason.

Government Orders

Some of the cases before the Supreme Court of Canada on inherent rights of our indigenous peoples relate to hunting and fishing. This is as cultural as the earliest peoples of this land. Certainly, most people in this House think of the hunter in the duck blind and that sort of consideration, but the inherent right for our first nations to hunt, in both modern and traditional ways, is a constitutional protection.

Would it not be reasonable to carve that out in a treaty that on many fronts is inferior to what Canada is already doing? I really hope the parliamentary secretary and other members of his caucus refrain from that divisive language suggesting that even having a reasonable concern is somehow phony. The last time I saw that degree of arrogance in the Liberal Party, it was from a member from Toronto named Allan Rock, who polarized Canadians by suggesting that people who were law-abiding hunters or sport shooters were somehow a public safety hazard for Canada.

I know some of my Liberal friends, including from rural parts like Yukon and Labrador, know how much it hurt Canadians for the government to suggest that bringing in a licensing and registry system for people who were already trained and responsible was going to have an impact on crime. It became a divisive, rural-urban issue. This Parliament, as much as it can, should try to have debates that do not quickly revert to that approach.

I have been hard on my friend, the parliamentary secretary. I know in Fredericton, especially with the base there—and I know he supports our men and women in uniform—he knows that culturally a lot of people find hunting and fishing to be a way of life, so if they have a concern, I think it is valid to consider that concern.

It is also a valid question to ask the United Nations why, when transparency provisions were wiped out in the negotiations over the ATT, a simple reference providing explicit exclusion for law-abiding and regulated use by hunters and sport shooters, as we do in Canada very effectively, was not provided for. That is a failure of this treaty. Certainly groups out there that still have this concern want to know that the government is at least hearing them and is not suggesting that it is a phony argument. I am hoping, as we debate this bill over the coming days, that we can talk about it in those terms, and that we can talk about it from a starting point of what Canada is doing now.

As a parliamentary purist, I have great respect for our parliamentary democracy, in both Houses and on both sides. This is where we debate the laws and regulations that govern Canadians. When we can work with our allies at NATO or the United Nations to help limit arms sales to North Korea or to places where there is conflict or so that we do not exacerbate someone's pursuit of technology that could be harmful, of course we would do that. We always have. However, we should also make sure, as parliamentarians, to remind Canadians that the starting point for Canada with respect to regulating, tracking, and limiting the export of military equipment and biological-chemical dangerous items is already superior to most of the world. If we do not start from that basis, I do not think we are being fair in this debate.

The final point I will make before I close is that it is not elevating debate in this House to suggest that if the Canadian Shooting Sports Association has a concern about overbreadth, their concern is somehow phony. I hope we have a debate that is better than that, and

that we have the context of the Export and Import Permits Act regime to underline a debate on Bill C-47.

• (1055)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy my colleague's comments and I really enjoyed hearing his arguments in the first part of his presentation. I was disappointed in the second part which, once again and for years, has brought up the bogus argument concerning legal ownership and lawful ownership of firearms, but I will pass over that.

What I would really like my colleague to tell me after hearing all that—because I thought he was rather defensive in arguing against the bill—is what the intention of the Conservative Party is with respect to supporting or not supporting the bill. Canadians would like to know whether the Conservative Party of Canada is going to support ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty. If it is not going to support it, they want to know why not. I would appreciate being enlightened by my hon. colleague on that question.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I too enjoy when the Minister of Transport weighs in on things. I enjoyed his interventions much more when he was sitting on this side as opposed to that side, but that is the way Parliament works. I have the utmost respect for him.

In that list of items, one thing I found absent was our world-leading position as a country in space and some of our technology related to space. I know the minister knows the issue far better than anyone in the House.

In the last government, the sale of MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates was prevented because of national security concerns. The member liked some of the arguments I made and did not like others.

Why did I sound defensive? It was because the parliamentary secretary ended his question and comment period in French by saying that this was going to be taking what Canada is doing to the next regime. I was listening without translation and from a distance, but he was leaving the effect that the regime Canada had in place was somehow inferior to Bill C-47.

Government Orders

My speech was intended to show that it is not. In fact, our tracking is far superior, and because of uncertainty—and with respect, I do think it is genuine, although he may suggest it is not genuine—all groups that have hunters and sports shooters, including indigenous hunters and sports shooters, who have a constitutional right for that, think it is unreasonable that one definition could not go in this treaty to carve out responsible and legal firearm use. To coin a term, I think that is a modest proposal, but because we do not have that carve-out and because I hear the language of the nineties creeping back in, I oppose the bill. However, I rest easy at night because our regime in place now is already doing more than this treaty would.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I want to remind members that the only person standing up during the discussion should be the person who is speaking. When I ask for questions and comments, other individuals can stand up at that time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague spoke at length about indigenous people's constitutional right to own firearms and hunt. I fully support that right, but I am a bit confused, because it seems as though we are talking about two different bills.

I have been following this issue for years and I have never seen anything in the Arms Trade Treaty that would have any impact whatsoever on the right of indigenous people or any other Canadians to hunt. I also do not see anything in the implementation bill that would affect that right.

Could my colleague please tell me exactly what section of the Arms Trade Treaty would affect this right?

● (1100)

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I look forward to working with my colleague at the foreign affairs committee, as a newer member of that committee. I would suggest that she is going to hear that exact concern if this bill comes to committee in the next month or two, and we are debating that right now.

What is interesting about the concern being expressed from hunters and sports shooters is that they are a cross-section of Canadians, including indigenous Canadians who have some unique rights. Their concerns are founded based on vague language in the treaty. They are also concerned in terms of the breadth of the term “broker” in the treaty. They are also very concerned by the fact that some countries, Canada included, wanted a specific carve-out for lawful firearms use. What we are talking about here is reasonable: why that was excluded despite Canada intervening and other countries asking. That would have given the certainties that lawyers like to see. They do not like ambiguity. They do not like uncertainty. The fact that it was rejected leads to that question.

The committee review process of this bill, I hope, will bring some of those concerns to Parliament and to one of our committees; so then we can at least see that these are not phony arguments, as someone on the government side suggested. These are genuine

concerns, and the fact that those concerns were rejected in the final negotiating rounds of this treaty leads some to believe that the treaty's intention is to regulate those types of civilian uses of firearms. Sometimes if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, perhaps it is a duck.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the intelligent speech that I heard from my colleague from Durham. My question for him is based on the following premise.

In 1995, I believe, Allan Rock, who was the minister of justice at the time, introduced the Canadian long-gun registry under the presumption that it would reduce crime. Lo and behold, what we found out across Canada is that criminals do not register their firearms. The premise of the Arms Trade Treaty from the United Nations is to keep communities more safe in various countries because they want to track the movement of firearms, much like the failed long-gun registry did here in Canada.

Does my colleague from Durham believe that illegal international gunrunners will be registering their firearms with the United Nations?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Alberta, who does a lot of work with hunters and anglers in Canada and knows that their questions are legitimate ones, which this Parliament should not only consider but consider respectfully because they are real concerns.

The member also touches on really the glowing hole in this treaty. He has identified it by the concern we have globally of arms getting into some conflicts. The fact is that three of the largest six trading nations in these types of goods are not part of this treaty. Canada is not a major producer of military equipment or nuclear, chemical, or biological. We are a producer because we are a technology-laden country with diverse manufacturing and trade, but we are not a leader.

In the context of the fact that it is vague in certain areas, Canadians should be rightly concerned about how this treaty would apply when we already have a very effective regime in Canada. I have heard no Canadian saying to me that we need to reform the Export and Import Permits Act. No one has ever said that.

I highlighted in one of my points the area control list empowered by this legislation. There is also an export control list. The government already has in its tools the ability to control or limit countries and what goods go out of Canada. We already have this ability, so the valid concerns about this treaty lead to my not wanting to support it.

Government Orders

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if my hon. colleague takes offence to the use of the word phony, I am happy to continue talking about the bogus argument that the members are making, as my colleague the Minister of Transport used when it comes to the argument that they are trying to insinuate that this would in any way affect law-abiding gun owners in Canada. It will not.

Based on some of the other confusion that the member displayed in his speech around the significant regime to which Canada is party, let me remind him that the ATT deals specifically with the conventional arms trade—often arms that go into conflict zones, that disproportionately affect women, children, girls, and vulnerable people. Was the previous government unaware of that, or did it simply not care to take a leadership role to fix that?

• (1105)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the parliamentary secretary. Therefore, as parliamentary colleagues, I invite him to collaborate on two things. First, I will go to a meeting of the Trade Controls Bureau with him, when he gets a briefing on what it has done since the 1940s with respect to the superior approach to regulation. Second, he knows my friend Brian Macdonald, who is an MLA in his area. I want him to go with Brian Macdonald to one of the hunting areas in New Brunswick to hear these concerns first-hand before using words such as phony or bogus.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, today marks the International Day of Peace. Canada often holds itself out as a peacemaker. However, if we truly want peace, we need to stop the proliferation of arms, particularly in areas troubled by unrest, in war-torn countries where human rights mean nothing.

[*English*]

However, Canada's recent track record in this respect is rather troubling. Many Canadians would be troubled to learn that in the last 10 years Canadian arms exports have nearly doubled. Moreover, Canada is the second most important arms exporter in the Middle East after the United States. Therefore, we are certainly heavily involved there.

[*Translation*]

Yes, Canada is now the second-biggest exporter of arms to the Middle East, after the United States. No one would certainly describe the Middle East as a calm, stable region.

Our arms used to be exported mainly to NATO countries. Now they often go to countries whose human rights records are questionable, to say the least. Saudi Arabia is the second-biggest buyer of Canadian arms and the second-biggest export destination for our weapons.

I am always troubled to see this kind of behaviour from a government that calls itself feminist, and I am not alone. Canadians do not support this.

[*English*]

The government has said that it has good measures in place to control its arms exports, and that it already has strong regulations. However, again, if we look at Saudi Arabia, the regulations state that we should not export arms to a country if there is reasonable doubt and risk that these arms will be used to commit human rights abuses. Although there is ample evidence for that being currently the case, the government is blind to it. Certainly, there is an investigation, but the Saudis have admitted that they want to repress people. The government is not only blind but seemingly deaf, on top of blind.

In August we learned that Canada watered down its own criteria for arms exports to countries with bad human rights records, and the government did this after pledging that Canada would accede to the Arms Trade Treaty, and after saying at that time that it would respect both the spirit and the letter of the treaty. Typically, the Liberals say that but do quite the opposite by watering down our criteria.

[*Translation*]

The best way to illustrate what I am talking about is to look at the number of export permit applications. Canada is exporting more and more to countries that do not respect human rights. How many of these export permit applications is Canada rejecting?

L'Actualité investigated and found that, of the 7,310 export permit applications submitted, only 10 were rejected. Ten. That says it all.

Most of our exports go to Saudi Arabia, which has been mentioned, China, Algeria, and other countries. That is why the government's decision to finally sign the Arms Trade Treaty gave people so much hope. This is something people have been calling for for years. We know that the Conservatives, for reasons that make no sense to most observers, steadfastly refused to sign the treaty. The NDP felt certain that the government would finally do something and that Canada would join the Arms Trade Treaty. Unfortunately, in typical Liberal fashion, the government has introduced a bill to implement the treaty. I know a lot of people were very anxious to see this bill.

• (1110)

This is another example of a typical Liberal bill. In other words, it is all talk and no action, nothing but a hollow shell.

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[English]

First, the bill does not address at all the issue of our exports to the U.S., which is half of our exports. Therefore, all of these exports will continue to fall outside the scope of this law and outside the scope of the treaty. This in itself, to start with, is a breach of articles 1, 2, and 5 of the Arms Trade Treaty, so one of the first things we are doing is breaching three of the key articles of the treaty. It does matter beyond breaching the articles of the treaty. First, there is the matter of transparency. When we get the annual reports on arms exports—and I hope we will get them sooner and that they will be clearer, more transparent, and understandable—half of our exports remain unreported. Is that transparent? I am listening to my colleagues here, and they do not think it is.

Also, when we talk about meeting the letter and spirit of the ATT, it means that arms or armament parts can be exported from Canada to the U.S. and then exported elsewhere. President Obama put a ban on exporting arms from the U.S. to Nigeria because of human rights concerns. President Trump made a deal—the art of the deal—with Nigerian authorities and lifted this ban, and now the U.S. is exporting planes and armaments to Nigeria made of components coming from which country, do members think? They come from Canada. It would be important to cover our exports to Canada.

[Translation]

The government will probably say that it is too difficult to do, because half of our exports go to the United States, and yet other countries manage to do it, including Australia and even Great Britain, one of our NATO partners. They have systems in place to track exports to the U.S.

We cannot say that we will respect the spirit and the letter of the treaty, and then violate specific articles or disregard the spirit and the letter of the treaty because it is too difficult. It has to be one or the other. Canada either complies with the treaty or it does not. Obviously, the government has no intention of complying with it.

Another huge problem is that the bill does not say anything about the assessment criteria that will be used for exports. That is rather strange, for this kind of bill.

• (1115)

[English]

That is a huge problem.

One expert asked me, after looking at the bill, where the meat is. The meat will be in regulations. The concrete criteria to oversee arms exports will be put in those regulations, regulations that do not have to be debated in the House, that will not be discussed among representatives of Canadians across the country, regulations that can be changed at any time by the current government or any subsequent government. This is very weak.

[Translation]

This is just smoke and mirrors.

On top of all that, there is another problem. In the briefing documents we received from Global Affairs Canada, it says that the regulations will set out the criteria the minister will take into account before issuing export permits.

We already have criteria in place that the minister must take into account when evaluating export permits and as a result we are selling arms to Saudi Arabia. The Arms Trade Treaty makes no mention of the criteria that must be taken into account. It talks about obligations and specific and serious restrictions. It provides a clear limit. Such and such is prohibited, the other is allowed. However, in the departmental information it says “must take into account”.

Obviously, this will be clarified in the regulations, the very regulations that no one in the House can debate. What is more, those regulations will be drafted behind closed doors.

There is another problem. Actually, there are quite a few, so I have to choose which ones to mention. According to the information in the briefing note provided by Global Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence will have its own system for implementing the legislation or the treaty. I do not get it. The left hand will do one thing and the right hand will do another.

How does that work?

Is there a chance that this creates some sort of loophole?

How will this work?

As far as I can tell, there is no plan here.

[English]

What the government is basically telling Canadians and the world is to just trust them. However, in matters of disarmament, I am sorry to say that I do not think the Liberal government can be trusted.

The NDP have tried to enhance transparency and oversight. We tried to create a committee that would, on an ongoing basis, study this issue of arms exports. This is something that Canadians care about. What did the Liberals say? It is no surprise that they said no.

When we asked the government to show the same kind of courage Canada has shown with regard to land mines and participate in the efforts of over 120 countries in the UN to work on nuclear disarmament, it said that maybe it would not work and that it was too difficult, as if it could not walk and chew gum at the same time.

Let us come back to Saudi Arabia. We are selling arms to a country that abuses human rights, despite our feminist foreign policy. The minister first told us that we could not do anything because it was a done deal. I happen to disagree with this, because a minister can suspend an export permit. We then learned that he signed the export permits after he and the Prime Minister had told us that it was a done deal. As I said, Canada should only export arms to a country if there is no reasonable risk that these arms will be used against civilians or to commit war crimes.

The Liberal government is not even respecting that. How can we trust the regulations it will put in someday once the bill passes, or how it is going to respect those regulations?

Government Orders

●(1120)

Again, with respect to Saudi Arabia, when I asked the government yesterday about the arms deal with Saudi Arabia, I was basically told that the government had asked the Saudis to respect human rights. While I am very pleased that the government did that, I am somewhat skeptical about the efficiency of the manoeuvre.

[*Translation*]

Nonetheless, we are going to support this bill because we have been asking for a bill on this issue for such a long time. We really want to see Canada truly accede to and abide by the Arms Trade Treaty.

I hope that the government will show good faith and agree to make amendments in committee. That is why we are going to vote in favour of this bill. However, this so-called implementation bill must be improved because right now it is not very effective. Canada and the entire world expect nothing less.

I said at the beginning of my speech that today is International Peace Day. We know that the illicit and irresponsible transfer of conventional weapons is a major cause of suffering in the world because it leads to all kinds of violence.

We want to put an end to that through the Arms Trade Treaty. We want to put an end to situations where companies based in Canada or third countries can sell weapons to South Sudan. We want to put an end to situations where Canada officially laments the tragedy in Yemen, which is currently experiencing a major humanitarian crisis, but continues to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, which leads the very coalition alleged to be committing war crimes in that country.

We need to clean up our arms export system, and unfortunately, this bill does not do that.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I followed the comments of my colleague opposite very closely, and in particular those that referenced Saudi Arabia. I remember during the election campaign the leader of third party making a solemn promise at the gates of the very factory where these vehicles were being manufactured, to the union that represented the workers, and to the leadership of the workers specifically, that come hell or high water, the NDP would honour the contract between the factory and Saudi Arabia.

The member for London—Fanshawe made the same promise, the same commitment, in writing to the workers, to the leadership of the union, and to the corporation. They publicly held a press conference and declared that they would not, under any circumstance, with no qualification, withdraw the trade deal between Saudi Arabia and the plant in the member's riding of London—Fanshawe.

I am curious as to how they described that promise, why they made the promise, and how they were going to fulfill it in light of the information the member has just shared with us, which predates that promise being made. Why did the NDP members campaign so fervently, so deliberately, so specifically on honouring this contract and then come into the House after the election and say they were just kidding?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, I get the impression that he was speaking with a bit of hyperbole and exaggeration.

First, I would like to point out that we have always said the workers and the equipment in London could also be used to supply the Canadian army, which is in dire need of such equipment. Taking care of these workers and their future is a top priority.

I wonder if my colleague is aware that Saudi Arabia executed many dissidents last year, or that serious allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity began to circulate this year, or that vehicles similar to the Canadian LAVs have been seen in Yemen and eastern Saudi Arabia, where political dissidents are being fiercely repressed. All this has been reported in the news in the past few months, and I would be happy to share the articles with my colleague.

●(1125)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do appreciate listening to what the member had to say today, as well the others who have spoken to this issue in the House.

As a new member of Parliament, the ATT is new to me. There is a lot of information to process. I am hearing conflicting perspectives on the Canadian trade controls bureau and its effectiveness. I believe we all want similar things. It is just a matter of how we come about getting them.

It seems to me that the member has a great deal of experience on this file. I have a question in relation to the UN and the expectations that we have in the House on accountability and transparency, and on measuring outcomes. For those countries that have already ratified this treaty, is the member aware of the UN's current assessment of the effectiveness of the treaty to date, in controlling and limiting illegal arms sale? Are they able to measure and determine if this is being effective?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Monitoring is certainly important, and I think it is something that needs to happen, collectively, on two levels. If I remember correctly, the United Nations has an office dedicated to tracking this type of file. Monitoring needs to happen collectively, through the United Nations, but it also needs to happen domestically. In Canada's case, half of the arms exports will not be tracked or reported in any way. There will be no assessment or ongoing monitoring, activities that I think are absolutely essential.

This brings me back to what we can do. The United Nations has a whole section dedicated to disarmament and to tracking these files. I was thinking that Canada could also create a committee that would meet regularly to monitor this extremely important issue.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am wondering about one very particular point. Since the Liberals have taken power here in Canada, there has been a transition in the United States to the administration of President Trump.

There is one aspect of the ATT that I think should concern all of us, and certainly my Liberal colleagues, particularly those who have said they stand up for human rights and want to raise Canada's reputation in the world. The exclusion of armament exports by Canada to the United States in the ATT is almost like a money laundering scheme, or an ethics or conscience laundering scheme.

Armaments can be produced in Canada, exported to the U.S., and be included in some armaments export deal to countries that are known human rights abusers—I think the member raised the case of Nigeria earlier, on which Canada has raised concerns about its human rights record.

Canada can say that we will not directly export arms to Nigeria, but in fact through the current bill, as proposed now, we can manufacture those same armaments in Canada, send them to the United States, where President Trump has said that he has no problem with Nigeria's human rights record, assemble the weapons there and send them on to Nigeria where they are then used to suppress human rights activities, to suppress minority groups within that country. That is one example, and there are other examples that we could call forward.

We would then condemn the Americans and say it is not right that they are sending those weapons to that country and killing people, including human rights activists.

The Prime Minister is at the United Nations today, making a declaration. In fact, in some ways I think he is counterposing his views to what President Trump said earlier to the in his bellicose statements encouraging more war, more conflict, and less peace. I encourage the Prime Minister to make those statements, and I am sure he will.

However, is there not some hypocrisy in then putting forward an Arms Trade Treaty here in Parliament that essentially attempts to wash Canada's hands of any involvement in any weapons sale to countries that we publicly condemn, yet privately allow our weapons to continue to be exported, allowing our manufacturing to contribute to our involvement in human rights abuse?

I am not sure how the Liberal government can countenance this level of hypocrisy. Or, it could just make the change and say we will not exclude the United States from the ATT. I am sure my colleague from Toronto would raise his constituents' concerns about this. I am sure my colleague from Winnipeg, who will speak on this later, would also do so. We should be saying that we will not sell weapons to that country. We cannot do indirectly what we are not willing to do directly.

If we are not willing to sell weapons to Nigeria because of human rights concerns, then how, for heaven's sake, can we sell them to the United States, which is willing to do the exact same thing in a more direct fashion?

● (1130)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and for the expression he coined, which I am going to borrow.

[English]

I am going to reuse the expression “conscience laundering” like money laundering. Yes, it is a big problem, it is a big issue and it raises a lot of points, which I mentioned in my speech.

I pointed out the fact that regulations could be changed by any government at any time. Yes, something has happened in the United States, where we now have the Trump administration. In Canada, hopefully we will not get similar surprises, but administrations can change. However, at some point, we could get a government that is even more inclined to not fulfill our commitments to the Arms Trade Treaty and further weaken the regulations. These things have to be put into law. That is one of the things we will ask for at committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to address this important issue. Many Canadians have taken a great deal of interest in this because they expect the Government of Canada to demonstrate leadership on the world scene on important issues.

I take exception to some of the comments made by my colleagues across the way, especially when they use the word “hypocrisy” with respect to this issue. The member for Spadina—Fort York brought up a wonderful example. Let me put it in the clearest fashion I can.

The New Democrats take the high ground, or try to be the moral authority on a particular issue, and use the word hypocrisy. Let me remind my friends that the leader of the New Democratic Party, in the last federal election, said to workers, unions, and anyone else who would listen that the NDP would honour and respect the agreement with Saudi Arabia. Today we have heard members across the way talk about how bad it is and that the government should not honour it, yet their very leader committed his party to honouring it. There is a consistency problem within the NDP ranks and we hope that over the coming months they can deal with that, but we will have to wait to find out what their actual position is on issues such as this.

Getting back on track, I want to focus my attention on what we are debating today and how it came to be.

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The Conservative Party should be familiar with what we are talking about today. There are a number of new Conservative members in the House, and I recognize that. However, when Stephen Harper was prime minister, he had delegates at the UN discussions. They were a part of the discussions in 2012 that ultimately led to the agreement. For whatever reason, and I do not quite understand why, they never signed that agreement. A member has said that he knows why they never signed it. Would that member please tell us why? Would that member please share with Canadians why the Conservatives refused to sign off on the agreement even though they participated in the discussions? Every G-7 country, with the exception of Canada, along with our NATO partners, have signed the agreement. I do not know why Stephen Harper was against it at the time, nor why the Conservatives still are to this day.

Our government is quite different, thank goodness, than the previous government. We recognize that there is a role for Canada to play on the international scene, and it is expected of us. In fact, today the Prime Minister is making his second address to the UN today.

This is important. These treaties are about making the world a safer place. Good, solid, responsible governments around the world understand and appreciate the importance of getting engaged in these things. At the end of the day, why would we not make the best efforts we can to make our world a safer place?

● (1135)

When Lloyd Axworthy was a minister a number of years ago, he played an important role in signing off on the land mine treaty. Canada led the way in dealing with land mines. Far too often, we hear the horror stories of land mines that are still there today. At least Canada, as one of many nations, recognized it was the right thing to do.

Once again, we have a treaty that was negotiated back in 2012 and then entered into force in 2014. However, we cannot thank the previous government for that. It chose not to be one of the countries to ensure it became enforced. Instead of having a desire to show leadership on the issue, the Conservatives felt it was more appropriate to sit back and take no action on this front.

Within two years, we have seen many things take place since the change of government. My favourite was our first piece of legislation, which was all about giving that tax break to Canada's middle class and having the 1% of Canada's wealthiest pay a little more in order for those in our middle class to have more money in their pockets. Whether it is that initiative, the infrastructure initiatives, senior benefit programs, the Canada child program, or the assisted dying legislation, so much other business of the House has been dealt with in two years. This treaty is also one of those priority issues. Within two years, we have had the department go through what has taken place, and now we have are in a position to debate it today.

My gut feel is that the Conservative Party does not necessarily understand what we are actually debating, or at the very least the principle of what we are debating today. If we listen to the questions of Conservative members, they are more interested in trying to relive an old argument about the gun registry, which was brought up in the 1990s and is something on which the Prime Minister has been very clear. They are regurgitating it. They are the Conservatives/

Reformers of the past. They have completely lost touch with what Canadians expect of an official opposition, and I am okay with that to a certain degree.

We just had a break, which was a wonderful opportunity to go into their constituencies and listen to what Canadians had to say. However, obviously, the Conservative Party has lost touch with what Canadians truly expect of government. We are having this debate, but they want to change the scope. They want to go back to the past. Therefore, I will tell them what we are actually talking about, and it is not domestic gun registry policy.

We respect gun owners in Canada, and we have been very clear on that. We have had clear answers even to those unrelated questions or concerns, which I believe the Conservative Party is just trying to stir up for political purposes, possibly trying to create a wedge issue. As opposed to trying to demonstrate that there is strong leadership within the Conservative Party on this file, they are trying to change or go outside of the scope of the legislation.

What is the scope? It is all about conventional weaponry. If members read the bill, this is what we are talking about. Listen to some of the Conservative members who have already spoken. They who are talking about nuclear weapons, biochemical weapons, and we all know about the gun registry and issues of that nature.

● (1140)

However, this is actually the core of the treaty which states:

This Treaty shall apply to all conventional arms within the following categories:

- (a) Battle tanks;
- (b) Armoured combat vehicles;
- (c) Large-calibre artillery systems;
- (d) Combat aircraft;
- (e) Attack helicopters;
- (f) Warships;
- (g) Missiles and missile launchers; and
- (h) Small arms and light weapons.

That is what the treaty is all about.

One of the Conservative MPs, I think it was the member for Durham, asked, why are we agreeing to this treaty when we have already things in place to do it? The member and the Conservatives are missing the point here. Number one is to understand what the treaty is all about, and get a sense of why it is being debated here today and where it is actually coming from. The United Nations, all other G7 countries, and all other NATO countries have already accepted it.

In fact, one of my New Democratic friends, just the other day, said there are different types of legislation, and that some legislation is fairly straightforward and should receive quick passage. I would suggest this is one of those pieces of legislation. At least, we can have it go to committee, and let committee deal with it. If anything, this government has demonstrated very clearly that, where committees do good work and are prepared to come up with ideas that can improve legislation in a very real and tangible way, and have been able to demonstrate that at the committee, we are open to those types of amendments.

Government Orders

This legislation should not be all that controversial. It is actually fairly straightforward. We could be doing a great service, I would suggest to look at the scope of the legislation, and accept it for what it is, as opposed to just opposing for the sake of opposing, and then trying to generate ideas as to why one is opposing it. Let us just move forward with it.

I am not trying to limit debate in any fashion. If people want to get engaged, such as I do, and talk about the importance of the treaty, that is great. I would ultimately argue, especially when we get treaties that are coming from the UN, and we have such wide support from all the G7 and NATO countries, our allies, that this is a very strong positive.

I look forward to the legislation ultimately passing. Through its passage, we would send a very important message, that at the end of the day, we recognize there is weaponry distributed throughout the world, manufactured in many parts of the world, but circulated in every region of the world.

Unfortunately and sadly, there are far too many cases that countries get this weaponry from wherever it originates. Obviously, we are most concerned about Canada, but we are not just limited to Canada. If it falls into the wrong hands, and at times it might end up doing so, we need to put up safeguards to minimize that risk.

That is really what this treaty to me is all about. It is minimizing the risk. If those responsible countries around the world choose to do nothing, we will have more terrorism and more violations of human rights.

When we have treaties of this nature, and this particular treaty dealing with those items I have listed, there will be a responsibility. It has often been said that Canada has a population of 35 million or 36 million people and, looking at the world population versus the population of Canada, we would wonder how much clout do we really have.

● (1145)

I have heard member after member on all sides of the House, New Democrats, Conservatives, and Liberals, talk about how Canada, even as a country with 35 million people, carries an incredible amount of influence around the world. Something that is earned, I would argue.

It is earned by the actions we take, and not just parliamentarians but Canadians in every region of our country demonstrate that concern. When a massive flood, earthquake, whatever it might be, takes place anywhere in the world, Canadians are the very first to participate, individuals, non-profit groups, governments, just name it, because we are not only very concerned about Canada but the impact of all the things around us.

Through the years, we have developed a very strong international reputation, a reputation of which I am extremely proud. Like many members, I have travelled outside of Canada and often people commend our country as being a fantastic place, and thank us. I had the privilege of serving in the Canadian Forces. I understand the carnage that can be caused by some of the weapons I have listed. I have marched and participated in Remembrance Day celebrations and recognitions of the achievements of our forces, the current and past members of the Canadian Forces.

I had those second-hand experiences by listening to those who had first-hand experiences and from what little first-hand experience I have, I have a basic understanding of the type of weaponry we are talking about in this treaty. Liberals want the treaty to pass, for Canada to join the G7 and NATO countries. We support this legislation and, ultimately, the treaty itself.

Let me highlight the important messages that need to be emphasized. The government is committed to taking a comprehensive, compassionate, and evidence-based approach on this issue. This was brought forward to us.

The summary of the bill states:

This enactment amends the Export and Import Permits Act to

- (a) define the term “broker” and to establish a framework to control brokering that takes place in Canada and that is undertaken by Canadians outside Canada;
- (b) authorize the making of regulations that set out mandatory considerations that the Minister is required to take into account before issuing an export permit or a brokering permit;
- (c) set May 31 as the date by which the Minister must table in both Houses of Parliament a report of the operations under the Act in the preceding year and a report on military exports in the preceding year;
- (d) increase the maximum fine for a summary conviction offence to \$250,000;...

There is so much more that is happening. I want to very briefly comment on how important that industry is to Canada. It would be a huge mistake for us to ignore that, and perhaps I will have the opportunity to expand on that if a question is posed to me.

● (1150)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I often enjoy listening to the member for Winnipeg North and his speeches, because he becomes quite animated. The volume in his speech often explains his compassion and sense of righteousness in what he is saying.

I happened to notice, when he was speaking today, that he was speaking about what is included in the bill. He was speaking with great volume nuclear weapons and tanks, basically weapons of mass destruction. When he mentioned small arms, he was quite hushed in comparison. It is because he does not want to recognize that the bill brings back a long-gun registry.

I bring this up because it was the long-gun registry that the Liberal government brought in, in the 90s, that peaked my interest in politics and led to my being here today. I will stand in the House and defend hunters, anglers, and sports shooters across the country against the government creating another long-gun registry, which is what this act would do.

How does the member opposite not believe that is exactly what the bill is doing?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would stand with the member if I believed that was, in fact, the case in this particular piece of legislation. That is why I tried, in the best way I could, to highlight what the bill actually does.

Government Orders

Let me be crystal clear, because the member across the way is not the only member from the Conservative Party who has raised this issue. The ATT does not affect domestic gun control regulations, period. It does not create a registry of conventional weapons. Nothing in the ATT prevents the lawful use of sporting firearms for legitimate purposes, such as sport shooting and hunting, nor does it hinder the legitimate trade in conventional arms. I do not know how much clearer we can be on the issue.

However, let us get right into the scope of the legislation itself. Canadians have a right to know whether or not the official opposition, and the new leadership within that opposition, actually support the UN treaty. Listening to the debate, I am of the opinion that they actually do not support it. They should realize that if they do not have a road to Damascus conversion on this issue, they will be completely offside with the rest of the G7 countries, with NATO countries, our allies, and this government.

• (1155)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the other Liberals who are not allowed to speak, I wonder if at some point the member could share a little of the space here. He has been here a while. So many new Liberal MPs have told me how keen they are to speak in the House of Commons. Some of our time is taken up by my friend, over and over again, regardless of the bill.

Very specifically, on this piece of legislation, the government has said we should not sell arms to countries that flout human rights abuses, yet under Bill C-47, there is a provision, a loophole, that allows Canadian arms to be manufactured here in Canada and then sent through the United States and on to those very same countries, particularly because Donald Trump feels they are okay, and he is looking to make a deal and wants to sell more weapons.

We could, at committee, allow a provision that would say that if we cannot sell directly to a country like Nigeria, which we cannot, then we cannot sell indirectly to a country like Nigeria through the United States. That seems like a reasonable and consistent position to take. Otherwise, the Liberals would be open to the accusation of hypocrisy to say they will not look, but will continue to practise abusing human rights and using Canadian armaments to do it.

I think my friend, who says he is very knowledgeable about the ATT and the bill, would see that as a glaring error in its construction right now. This loophole through the U.S., with the current administration, which I hope my friend does not agree with when it comes to human rights or respect for international law in the vision of Donald Trump, should be closed. We should not allow Canadian weapons to be diverted through the United States, and then on to regimes that Canada does not support or respect.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my understanding is that the U.S.A. has to abide by the same treaty. I would remind the members across the way that records for export of arms have been required since 1942. We look at the treaty as a global issue that Canada should be part of, and there are some in this chamber who believe, as I do, that Canada can play a very strong leadership role on the issue.

When the member makes reference to the word “hypocrisy”, I addressed that in my opening comments. Before starting to point a

finger across the aisle here to the government benches, the member should be reminded that there are more fingers pointing back in his direction, and he needs to reflect in terms of what the leader of the New Democratic Party said in the last election related to Saudi Arabia, followed a month later by members who said completely the opposite. We need not take any lessons on hypocrisy from members of the New Democratic Party, especially on this issue.

I did not get the opportunity to comment in regard to the industries within Canada. We do produce some incredible machinery and through that there are many middle-class jobs. All parties on both sides of the House have recognized that fact. Ensuring that we have responsible policy for exports of arms is something Canadians expect of us, and that is what this government is delivering.

• (1200)

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reiterate for the record that we are not bringing back the long-gun registry.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to explain how the bill would make trade more progressive and more transparent, and strengthen oversight on how future governments can trade arms overseas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we get a great deal of misinformation, which has been spoken already in the last couple of hours from those within the chamber who have a political interest in trying to create wedge issues where there is no wedge, and that is dealing with the gun registry. It is just a non-issue.

Members can say and do what they want, but they should know that Canadians are not dumb. If they were listening to what Canadians are actually saying as opposed to trying to tell Canadians untruths, they would be better off to listen and get behind this piece of legislation. That goes to my colleague's question because we are going to see more transparency and more accountability. Countries around the world have recognized the importance of this treaty and have established some guidelines, some thresholds, much of which is going to be public in different way. We see that as a good thing, and that is why I would encourage my Conservative friends across the way to support the legislation.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rose several times before, and was not able to be recognized. I probably was not quick enough to get up to be recognized. Before I begin with my remarks, I notice that the theme of the Liberal Party platform is hypocrisy. I would never accuse my New Democratic colleagues of that. I, at least, know that they believe in something.

We often disagree, but on the Liberals' side it is all about power and how to use it. We can see it right here in the legislation and the treaty itself. They say one thing but the law says something completely different. Through talking points, press releases, and carefully scripted exempt-staffer-written speeches on that side, they are saying the truth is that they are not creating a registry when they actually are.

Government Orders

We heard the parliamentary secretary mention that the G7 and NATO have signed on and are abiding by it. One of the biggest arms manufacturers and biggest military equipment manufacturers, the United States, signed it but did not ratify it. That is a factual error that the parliamentary secretary committed in this House.

There is a Yiddish proverb that says that half an answer also says something. We are hearing half answers a lot on that side. They are not saying the full thing. I wanted to repeatedly rise in the House and ask them to show me in this legislation and the treaty where sharpshooters, hunters, and sports shooters will not be affected by a gun registry. That is exactly what is going to happen. My remarks will be principally demonstrating how, in fact, this creates such a system, not one run necessarily directly by the federal government, but one through the collection and amalgamation of information that will do exactly that.

This morning, we heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs present this bill and make a big deal about how no lawful gun owner would be affected by this. He is carrying the water today for his minister. I know that. What is the clause? Why did he not mention in this House what clause it was that protects gun owners, law-abiding, family-oriented people who just enjoy hunting or sport shooting on weekends with their friends? Where is the section in the legislation that specifically speaks to them and exempts them from sections of this bill? Why did they not choose to add perhaps something in the preamble to the amended legislation that would say that they believe Canadians have a right to lawfully own firearms for lawful purpose? Why did they not provide a greater clarity clause, as it is called here?

Why did the Liberals not express their reservations through that mechanism? If it is not in the arms treaty that the United Nations has, why did they not go ahead and just write it in? They could have done that. It would have been a drafting mechanism to demonstrate to lawful gun owners in Canada that the government has their backs and is actually listening.

The best I could find was a press release on the Government of Canada's website that states:

The proposed legislation is consistent with Canada's existing export controls and system of assessing export permit applications. The proposed changes will not impact the legitimate and lawful use of sporting firearms.

They could have put that into a preamble. Instead, they chose to put it into a press release, which really has no force of law or effect to it. Why did they not do that?

When the member for Durham spoke, he basically explained exactly what Canada has been doing up to this point. He covered it all, from the 1940s to today: the export control system that Canada has for military manufactured equipment and its export and import controls.

When we speak about the treaty, article 10 talks about the brokering, how it is going to be controlled now, how people will need to get permits, and that there will be certification of documents that will need to be created. It even says that it may include requiring brokers to register or obtain written authorization before engaging in brokering. This is for military equipment.

The parliamentary secretary went through the list in article 2, the scope of the treaty. I will go through it too. Before I do, I want to mention the record-keeping aspect of it, which is what many gun owners are concerned about in Canada. This is article 12 of the treaty, which goes through details such as:

Each State Party shall maintain national records, pursuant to its national laws and regulations, of its issuance of export authorizations or its actual exports....

It then goes into further details, such as "transit or trans-ship territory under its jurisdiction". It also talks about conventional arms actually transferred. It then goes into certification details such as what type of registry this will be and how it shall be kept.

● (1205)

In the law, we see that they are amending the section on keeping of records, which is 10.3(1). Then they are amending sections 10.3 (4), (5), and (6), but in there, the minister can already direct individuals and organizations to keep records in a specified manner and for a specified purpose. The minister can tell them what to do with it.

I know that the parliamentary secretary talked about scope, and started reading off all of them. I am going to do it, too, just to refresh the memory of this House.

Article 2 is about scope: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems—we can all agree the average Canadian should not own any of these things—combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers, and small arms and light weapons.

I have an electronic version of the Merriam-Webster dictionary. The definition of "small arms" is "weapons (such as handguns and rifles) that are fired while being held in one hand or both hands". That could mean civilian or military use. There are many firearms that have a dual use, that are used by military forces across the world, even our allies, for training purposes, for cadet programs and that also have a secondary use.

Lots of times the same manufacturer will make two versions of the same firearm, one for civilian use and one for military use. It is military equipment that the member says the treaty is concerned with and the law is concerned with. However, it actually covers everybody, because it covers all the manufacturers. That is where there is a problem.

Even though he said that the previous Conservative government of the time had participated in negotiations of a treaty, governments participate in negotiations of treaties all the time. Sometimes when a government has a losing hand or it does not get what it wants in a treaty, then the government does not accede to that treaty, regardless of whether it is about firearms, military equipment export controls, or financial regulations. Governments choose at the time of signing whether they agree with the principles within the treaty and whether they can actually get it ratified by their parliaments, hopefully. One would hope that they would then turn to their parliament for that second step.

Government Orders

I want to give an example. If, for our anniversary—and we have tried to do this before and ran out of time—I go out and buy a Beretta shotgun, a very specific one, an A400 Xtreme 12 gauge semi-automatic shotgun at Cabela's in Calgary, for \$2,200, and we decide we would like to go for a weekend of duck hunting, I would become the end user, as covered by the treaty and by this legislation.

The government would then keep a record of me, having purchased this firearm, and would then notify the Italian government about my purchase. Now, that is a gun registry. Where is the concern for privacy laws? Why does the Italian government need to know whether I own that particular Beretta shotgun? I would like to know. Where is the concern about the privacy of Canadian gun owners, when their information will be transferred in that fashion to another government? I know that NATO countries are participating in this. I will mention that afterwards.

What we are seeing through this Arms Trade Treaty, and specifically this legislation, is a two-tier system. There is one for the despots and tyrants of the world, and one for law-abiding democracies of the world.

Let us remember the earlier debate just a few days on Bill C-21, when we talked about privacy rights and customs control with the United States. One party was particularly worried on this side of the House, the New Democratic Party. It was extremely worried about privacy rights of Canadians.

What about the privacy rights of lawful gun owners in Canada? What about them? What about when we transfer this information on specifically what they own, how they purchased it, their MasterCard or Visa information, to another government? Why does it need to know?

The shop owner needs to know, of course, for warranty purposes. If something happens and it is defective, I need to take it back to the shop owner so the manufacturer can fix it.

That is an example. That is also a dual-use weapon. There could be a military version that is used for training purposes. It could be used for target shooting. Beretta is a manufacturer of a lot of military equipment, and some of it does have a dual use. One purpose is military; one purpose is civilian. I do not see a difference being made here.

I talked about these two worlds that we are basically creating. Russia and China are not parties to the ATT. Russia is one of the largest exporters in the world, and it did not sign. It exports 39% of its military equipment to India, 11% to China, and 11% to Vietnam, its top three markets. None of those three are signatories to this treaty.

• (1210)

In the total take of what China exports in military equipment, 35% goes to Pakistan, 20% to Bangladesh, and 16% to Myanmar. Pakistan is not a signatory to this treaty. Bangladesh is a signatory but has not ratified it, so the rules do not apply to it. However, it intends to sign it. Myanmar has not done so either.

This creates two worlds. One is that in the western world the democracies agree that the arms control should exist and we should know who the end-user is. On principle, I do not disagree with that.

It is an important goal to track sales and understand where weapons go, with military equipment being whatever it is on the list, which is why the Canadian government has been doing it, as the member for Durham said, through the Export and Import Permits Act. We have known about this and have been doing it since the 1940s. Therefore, we already know that we track all exports of military equipment using categories negotiated by the World Customs Organization. We have been tracking it with that organization. We have been doing our part and doing what we expect other countries to do now.

The blanket ban option, as the member for Durham mentioned, is available through the area controls. He mentioned North Korea and Iran, and we can add others to that list. We could add regions to it if that is the desire of the government. It already has that option and mechanism to do so.

There are also drafting issues with the legislation itself. This is from the Rideau Institute. I know it may seem odd that a Conservative reads something from the Rideau Institute, but I do like to see both sides and the problems that people on the left and the right have with particular legislation. It mentions a drafting issue in proposed section 7 of this legislation, asking why the government is relegating a central provision of the enabling legislation, namely, the legal obligation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs when assessing export permits, to the regulations. All of those criteria are in the law right now, but they are being moved into the regulations.

I mentioned this before at committee in regard to other pieces of legislation. I was on the foreign affairs committee, but I have moved to the Standing Committee on Finance. At many of the committees I have been substituted in, I have mentioned that more should be in statute than in regulation and that more should be decided by the House and that other place than by government ministers sitting around a small table. More voices, not less, should have a say on what the categories and the criteria should be, especially for something like the export and import of military equipment. That is a drafting issue that I have, and I have mentioned the others that I have.

If the government wants to say it is on the side of lawful gun owners, it could have introduced a greater clarity clause, amended the preamble, and written it into law. However, it chose not to. That was a choice it made. The government could issue as many news releases, make as many speeches, and make as many Facebook posts as it wants, but it does not change the fact that there is no difference made between the manufacturer of equipment for military and civilian purposes in the law. The manufacturer is the same. The equipment is made in the same place.

Government Orders

It is not the principle of arms control we disagree with. Of course, people agree with controlling the movement of military equipment to other countries. That is why we have been doing it since the 1940s. What the Conservatives fervently disagree with is that there is no protection for lawful gun owners in the legislation or in the treaty itself. Those are serious issues.

The summary provided for this legislation talks about fines being increased, about the term “broker” and how brokers will now have to get permission to be the in-between in the sales of military equipment. It talks about a report having to be tabled in the House that will define the military exports in the previous year. However, as the New Democrats have suggested, the United States will not be included in it because it is a trusted ally. I agree that it is a trusted ally; it is the second greatest democracy in the world after our own here in Canada. The government replaced some of the requirements that only countries that Canada has an intergovernmental arrangement with may be added to the automatic firearms country control list. By a requirement, a country may be added to this list only on the recommendation of the minister after consultation with the Minister of National Defence. Again we have more ministers deciding things and Parliament finding out afterward what is going on. I would much rather that we found out first and decide in the House first what the rules will be and how things should be.

• (1215)

After having returned from the summer recess, it was interesting for me to realize when the parliamentary secretary was speaking that I missed this part of my day and debating him in the House, where he usually brings his A game.

I enjoyed campaigning in Winnipeg over the summer and hearing from the constituents in the different ridings. The parliamentary secretary mentioned that he is open to debate and continuing this. However, just before we returned, the government House leader threatened during a CTV or CBC interview to move more time allocation in this session to achieve its mandate, but the parliamentary secretary is saying something else. I would assume that the member talks to the government House leader on a regular basis. Therefore, I wonder if the government will move time allocation on this a piece of legislation if more members rise in the House to have a say and represent lawful gun owners, hunters, and those who enjoy sports shooting. I met many of them in my riding during the last election. I always tell my campaign volunteers that if a garage door is open and they see someone fixing or cleaning his or her lawfully owned firearm to leave them alone, as it is not the best time to approach someone. It is better to come back to those houses later on.

Treaties alone do nothing. They are just pieces of paper. One of the problems with the ratification of the ATT by the government is that the Liberals will push it through because they have the votes. At the end of the day, they will have their way and the lawful gun owners across Canada, who have legitimate concerns, will be the losers.

I want to ask these questions of the parliamentary secretary who presented this bill in the House on behalf of his minister. How many gun owners did he or the department speak with? How many associations did they speak to and consult with? How many people

said it was a great idea, and how many said it was a bad idea, and why? I did not have an opportunity to do ask these questions earlier, because so many members were standing to speak that I was not noticed.

As the member for Durham so eloquently stated, we already have an effective system for the control of exports and imports of military equipment. Therefore, the main concern on this side of the House is the rights and privileges of lawful gun owners. It is not just the rural members; it is also the urban members. I represent an urban riding. There are a lot of sports shooters in my riding. The Shooting Edge is located across the river just over the edge of my riding in the riding of the member for Calgary Midnapore. It is always packed. There are a lot of people who enjoy the sport and the challenge. However, this treaty will create a registry system. In the example I gave previously, the manufacturer and the government where that manufacturer is based will know that I had purchased a Beretta shotgun from Cabela's at a certain price, what it is, and what it does. However, it also applies to ammunition. Therefore, when the member opposite said that the treaty talks about scopes and small arms, he should look at the definition in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, which includes handguns, rifles, or a firearm being held in one or both hands. That is extremely broad.

Gun owners, who are not dumb and can read legislation, figured out long ago that the Liberal Party of Canada is not on the side of lawful gun owners. The gun registry has cemented that idea. Therefore, I do not understand how the Liberals can defend this piece of legislation and the implementation of a national treaty and say that lawful gun-owning Canadians, who go home every day to their family, will not be impacted by this at all. There is no way they can say that.

• (1220)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be in this chamber again after the summer break. The member gave a long speech. However, the reality is that the preamble of the ATT recognizes the legitimate trade and lawful ownership of guns, including for recreational, cultural, and sporting events. Therefore, my question for the hon. member is straightforward. Can he point to precisely what section in the legislation affects domestic hunters and gun users and does not permit that?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, as I said during my speech, it is right there, and the issue is registration. Canadians will continue to own firearms even if this law is passed, but the problem will be that the federal government will be telling other governments who owns what and where. The issue is registration, and that is why we are talking about a gun registry through the back door. This is the fundamental issue.

Government Orders

Gun owners typically do not want that type of information to be shared with the federal government, but it is shared. The police know, and the manufacturers know for warranty purposes. However, it is the centralization of that information, the passing of it on to foreign governments, that is the issue for gun owners.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. As he mentioned at the beginning, we may have some differences of opinion. However, I believe that we agree on what we have seen over the past two years, which is Liberal hypocrisy, or the extraordinary ability to say one thing and to do the opposite.

This is evident especially when the Liberals espouse reconciliation with the First Nations and refuse to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Liberals also say that they will tackle climate change, but they are not making any significant changes and have even given the green light to some pipelines. They promised electoral reform and then reneged on that promise. They say that they will lower taxes for small and medium-sized businesses, then they do nothing and attack our job creators.

Now, we have a bill meant to ensure that the Arms Trade Treaty is signed and implemented, but ultimately, it is nothing but a hollow shell that will change absolutely nothing. The Liberals, who are happy with the status quo, are again spouting rhetoric.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. He is right. Hypocrisy is the central theme of Liberal politics in this country. For the past two years, that is all this side of the House has seen. This government says one thing and then puts forward a completely different bill in Parliament. The Liberals say certain things and then do the opposite.

I love the member's metaphor of the hollow shell. That is exactly what this bill is for Canadians who are legitimate firearms owners. In our debates in Parliament about this bill, we are going to defend the interests of these people so that the people who the Liberals are standing up for will not be the only ones to be heard. We must also represent the citizens who make the effort to register their firearms and obey the law imposed by the Canadian government. We want to remove this obligation so that a foreign government does not know what types of firearms they buy, and where and why they buy them.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we heard in previous speeches was who was all in and who had ratified or signed this agreement. If I remember Woodrow Wilson, one of the great U.S. presidents, he signed an agreement, the League of Nations, but it was never ratified. Perhaps the member could clarify the difference between a U.S. president signing a document and ratifying it.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, one of the basic things in government is that the executive is charged by the legislature, by parliament, or in the case of the United States, Congress, to negotiate a treaty and work out the best terms it can bring back to the legislative bodies to ratify. The G7 includes all of our allies, but in this case, the United States signed a treaty but has not ratified it.

Therefore, it is not caught in this system of having to abide by the constraints of the ATT.

Now, the U.S. has its own export and import controls. It is also one of the world's largest exporters of military equipment. Canada and Canadian manufacturers do a great deal of business with the United States. I know this because my father was a defence contractor for 30 years. He has literally worked on every single naval ship in Canada in the past 30 years. He has also worked on a great deal of American ships on behalf of the U.S. Navy, which his company was working for at the time, to provide equipment, servicing, and technical knowledge. Therefore, we do a great deal of trade with the U.S.

There are probably hundreds of thousands of jobs that depend on that specific type of trade in military equipment across our border. It is important to remember there are many such manufacturers. As I said before, there is only one firearms manufacturer in Canada, which is in Ontario, but we have to remember that a lot of the information that will be collected through this registry system will be sent overseas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in 2012, the Conservative Party was in government and Stephen Harper was the prime minister. That is when Canada actually participated in the negotiations for the treaty we are debating today. I would remind the member that the Conservatives voted in favour of it at the UN negotiations.

Could the member explain what has happened to cause the Conservative Party to want to vote against the treaty today when the Conservatives were at the table in 2012 and voted in favour of it?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, again, the member has confused the difference between a member of the executive and a member of Parliament. He cannot say "we on this side in the government", because only members on the front bench are members of the executive. They are members of the government. That member is only a supportive member. When asking a question of a member of Parliament such as myself, who did not serve in that Parliament, as to why a government did or did not do something is a question I cannot answer. I was not at the United Nations.

If I recollect properly, the Conservative government at the time signed on to the treaty but did not ratify it, and there is a fundamental difference. Then we can work on doing things like proper drafting where it will say that lawful gun ownership will be protected, or that registry information will not be collected thereby creating a gun registry through the back door, or where a greater clarity clause will be included. There are mechanisms to do all of these things. The Liberal government has just chosen not to do any of them.

• (1230)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's remarks are always well-thought-out, entertaining, and full of wise sayings.

Government Orders

I appreciated his bringing up the concern that the NDP shared about what was not in the bill but would be added in regulation afterward, not in statute. I want to give him the opportunity to perhaps expand on that.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer with a Yiddish proverb, “Half an answer also says something.” I try to provide complete answers as best I can, but I do not hear them from the other side.

I prefer to see statutes with the least amount of regulation as possible. There is another piece of legislation working its way through the House on cannabis specifically and there are 33 regulations in it.

It is much better for members of Parliament and senators to decide on criteria, rules, and definitions rather than members of cabinet or officials in departments. It should be left up to the House to decide those types of things. Definitions that are in the dictionary should be decided by the House. We should take back control from the executive and from the civil service and decide for them how they shall do things instead of allowing future regulations to be developed years down the line. That is also a way that governments choose to delay and obstruct.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-47, an issue that is important bill to members on all sides of the House.

The Arms Trade Treaty holds the record for the quickest entry into force of any arms control treaty. It is a sign of the great importance that the international community attaches to this treaty that it reached the required number of ratifications required to enter into force so quickly.

The ATT now has 91 state parties and a further 42 states have signed on but have not yet ratified the treaty. It is now time to add Canada to the number of state parties. Canada has long sought to advance export controls as a means of reducing the risks that can come from illicit trade in conventional arms. Joining the ATT, which calls on all state parties to set up effective export controls, is a natural step. Canada's accession to the ATT would further demonstrate to all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, and to the international community our commitment to tackle the risks associated with irresponsible and illicit trade in conventional weapons.

Canada, however, cannot fulfill the global aims of the ATT alone. Universalization of the ATT is essential to its success. The ATT, if broadly adopted internationally, can contribute substantially to global peace and security.

Terrorists rely on access to arms largely from illicit or poorly controlled sources. Transnational crime both uses and profits from illicit arms trade. Conflict and instability is fuelled by easy access to conventional weapons. All of these scenarios can and will be reduced, if not stopped, by preventing these weapons from being illegally traded or diverted. This is what the ATT aims to achieve. Ensuring that the treaty fulfills its promise requires the widest possible adherence and effective implementation around the world.

It is important to note that properly regulated arms trade does not prevent states from meeting their legitimate defence and security needs. The treaty recognizes there is a legitimate place for

international arms trade when it is undertaken responsibly and with carefully crafted controls. In accepting international norms for the transfer of arms, ATT state parties have struck a balance between national security interests, including legitimate uses of weapons, and the need to address the consequences of unregulated trade in conventional weapons.

Canada has a role to play in advancing the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty. We have already begun to do so by participating as an observer in meetings of ATT state parties and by supporting multilateral efforts to encourage states to ratify or accede to the ATT.

Our work here today helps set an example for other states considering accession to the ATT.

First and foremost, we are demonstrating our commitment to full implementation of the treaty. Accession to the ATT is a relatively straightforward process for Canada. We already conform to the spirit of the treaty and have strong export controls in place. However, our government realizes we need to do more. There are elements of the ATT that Canada does not yet fully meet, notably, in regulating brokering, and we have taken a firm position that we will not accede to the ATT until we are fully compliant with it.

Second, we are committed to implementing the ATT in a manner that not only meets but exceeds the requirements of the treaty. Bill C-47 would further strengthen the rigour of our export controls to meet and, indeed, seek to exceed the obligations of the ATT. We intend to share this experience with other states in forthcoming meetings of the ATT.

However, leading by example is not enough. All ATT state parties must establish a national system for the control of arms. They must strengthen their laws, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms. Our government recognizes that implementing new legislative systems and export controls can be difficult, particularly for states that may not have significant previous experience in this field.

● (1235)

We are therefore committed to assisting other states that wish to join the ATT, or that have become state parties or are unable to fully implement the treaty. The government has therefore contributed \$1 million to the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. The UNSCAR is a multi-donor flexible-funding mechanism to provide focused and effective support for the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and the UN program of action on small arms and light weapons. Through this trust facility, Canada is working with other international partners and with the UN to help states accede to and effectively implement the ATT.

It is unfortunate that, to date, in several regions of the world where flows of conventional weapons contribute to high levels of conflict, there is still a low number of ATT state parties. The UN trust facility can also help these states improve their legislation, end-user controls, and management of weapon stockpiles. Its focus on gender and children further supports the goals of the ATT and can make a real contribution to those who are too often the victims of illicit trade in conventional weapons.

Government Orders

Of course, accession to the ATT alone cannot stop illicit weapons flows, which is why our government has also partnered with the international NGO small arms survey, contributing \$224,000 to survey a list of weapons flow in the key region of the Libya-Chad-Sudan triangle. This survey is a starting point to implement concrete follow-on actions to reduce illicit arms flows along the pathways identified by the small arms survey. In doing so, we will contribute concretely to reducing access to weapons in a region where these conventional arms undermine security and socio-economic development. We will also promote international security by cutting out flows of arms to terrorists and criminal groups in the region.

Canada can play an important role in promoting the universalization of the ATT. However, we can only do so if we take a leadership role, which our government is doing on a number of fronts, in countering the proliferation of conventional weapons and promoting strong export controls as a means of ensuring that legitimate trade in conventional arms is conducted responsibly, something I am sure all members of the House desire. It is therefore essential that we rejoin our international partners and allies in their collective effort through the Arms Trade Treaty. Canada needs to be at the table.

It is time for Canada to promote internationally agreed standards for the arms trade that will reduce human suffering, help prevent arms from being used in serious violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, and combat terrorism and organized crime.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and I have to say that I concur with a certain number of the major principles presented in the act. However, the issue is that, despite the bill's good intentions, the details will be laid out in regulations, and members will not have an opportunity to respond because regulations are not subject to a vote in this chamber.

I would like to hear what the member has to say about accepting certain things that are not directly set out in the legislation. For example, our exports to the United States, which represent 50% of our total exports, will be exempt.

Therefore, what one cannot do directly with a country that does not respect human rights, one could do indirectly by going through the United States. Does my colleague find this to be acceptable?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, Canada's joining the ATT will allow us to conform to all our other G7 countries and allies. We now will have the right and responsibility to own export controls on conventional arms trade and will create the legal obligation for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, before issuing an export permit or brokering a permit, to undertake assessment criteria. That is one big step forward under Bill C-47, something we should all support.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question goes back to a previous speech we heard on this matter and the point that was raised. I would like to know what the member's thoughts are on this specific issue. It is that this initiative gives rise to potential concerns regarding privacy.

One of the groups that I have the honour of working with and have been crisscrossing the country and speaking with is young people. Those young people raise two major concerns, and everywhere we go it is the same. It is regarding privacy and freedom.

I know from the member's speech and from other speeches by members of the Liberal Party that they do not have those concerns, but we heard earlier that if someone were to walk into Cabela's or a pro shop of some kind and purchase a Beretta, the person's information would then be transferred to another government. Could the member comment and tell Canadians why their personal information should be transferred to another government?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to say is that the Arms Trade Treaty does not and will not affect domestic ownership of firearms in Canada.

I grew up in northern British Columbia in the riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, which is represented by another individual in the House. A number of friends and family members are farmers and hunters who hunt for moose for two weeks with friends. It is something they do annually. It is a big fishing community, so the farmers and fishermen have my full support. Nothing in Bill C-47 would impede their privacy or right to purchase a hunting rifle or shotgun, or whichever weapon they choose to legally buy.

I would like to clarify and make sure everyone is on the same page with regard to individuals wishing to bring in a weapon from Italy, for example, such as a Beretta. Under Bill C-47, nothing would change in the process. The process remains absolutely unchanged for someone wishing to purchase a weapon in Italy, for example, and bring the weapon here to Canada. That needs to be pointed out to the members on the opposite side, because I keep hearing that and I want to make sure we put on the record that nothing changes.

• (1245)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to reiterate and outline to Canadians that Canada is the only member of the G7 and our NATO allies that is not a member of this treaty. Not only is this one of the campaign promises that the member and I ran on, but it is also an important reboot of our commitment to the international community. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has said, this measure would help prevent human rights abuses and protect lives.

In my colleague's opinion, how is this going to help Canada do its part to prevent human rights abuses, and what are the mechanisms that will clarify what companies can and cannot do when selling arms internationally?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-47 and Canada's leadership on this issue and coming to the table with international partners not only on this issue but on a number of issues, including climate change, gender parity, and a number of fronts where we are leading the way, is very important. We can be at the table and help end suffering in certain areas of the world where conflict does exist, and a number of mechanisms in the bill will allow us to achieve this goal, which we should pursue on a day-by-day basis.

Government Orders

It is something that our government remains focused on. It ensures that Canada strengthens existing practices and becomes a party to the ATT, something that the previous government unfortunately failed to live up to its duty to do.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard time and again today from the Liberal members specific words that this does not affect domestic firearms ownership. They have been very careful. They must have been coached very well on the use of the word “ownership”. What it does affect is firearms purchase in B.C., because proposed subsection 10.3(1) of the act states:

Every person or organization that applies for a permit, import allocation, export allocation, certificate or other authorization under this Act shall keep all records that are necessary to determine whether they have complied with this Act.

Then other parts of the act go on to say those records must be kept and made available. I have yet to hear from one of them how this does not create another gun registry, and not just for long guns, but a registry for every gun, because we heard the member for Winnipeg North state that it does include small arms.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, let me walk the member through the process. That is probably the best way I can do it.

The process that existed under the Conservatives would remain absolutely unchanged under Bill C-47. First, if someone wishes to purchase a weapon in Italy and then bring it to Canada, the individual must be at least 18 years old and have a possession and acquisition licence, a PAL, with a licence privilege for the classified arm that is being imported. Second, all firearms must be declared at Canadian customs and the applicable duties and taxes must be paid. Third, no import authorization for firearms that are not prohibited under Canadian law would be required. If the individual wanted to travel to Italy with a sporting or recreational firearm, he would need to apply for an export permit. This is the system that existed under the former government, and there is absolutely no change to that. It will be the system that exists under the current government, which I have the pleasure of serving with.

If the Italian government wanted to verify his permit, it would be done without providing personal information. Again, this is the same system that existed under the prior government, and Bill C-47 would not change that system under the current government.

I hope I have clarified that for the hon. member.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Peace River, who will be speaking after me.

It is an honour to rise in this place to speak on Bill C-47, an act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code. As the government has signed the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty, this bill takes steps to meet its obligations.

The Arms Trade Treaty is very broad in scope. It governs the trade in everything from small arms to main battle tanks, as well as combat aircraft. In fact, article 5 of the treaty explicitly requests that the treaty be applied to “the broadest range of conventional arms.” Why illegal hunting rifles should be regulated by the same treaty as an attack helicopter is still a little unclear to me, but perhaps the hon. members opposite have figured it out.

Given the treaty's unfortunately broad scope, the process of meeting Canada's obligations under this treaty deserves close scrutiny. We need to ensure that law-abiding firearms owners are not negatively impacted.

To its credit, the Arms Trade Treaty is a treaty with laudable objectives. Preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms is undoubtedly an admirable goal. Canada must not stand idly by as weapons flow to conflict zones, where they may be used to inflict horrific abuses on civilian populations and fuel terrorist organizations.

Conservatives have always been supportive of measures to establish international arms control standards. However, the government's own former minister, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent at the time, stated in June 2016 that “Canada already meets the vast majority of Arms Trade Treaty obligations.” He also said, “In fact, the Arms Trade Treaty was designed to bring other countries up to the type of high standard that Canada already applies through its robust export control regime”.

These remarks do make me wonder at the wisdom of subjecting the arms industry to regulatory upheaval by signing the Arms Trade Treaty and introducing this bill. Apparently Canada was already more than compliant. It is important to remember that major arms exporters such as Pakistan, Russia, and China are not party to the treaty, which will limit its effectiveness in actually controlling the global arms trade.

It is also notable that contrary to the Liberals' talking points, Canada was not the only holdout on the bill in G7. Our closest trading partner and ally, the United States, has not ratified it, so we are far from alone in abstaining.

It is also troubling that the treaty's scope is extremely broad. It does not acknowledge the legitimate, lawful ownership of firearms for personal and recreational use. What is in the preamble is not in the treaty.

Nevertheless, I respect that the government at least has good intentions in contributing to the treaty's stated purposes of international peace, stability, and reducing human suffering.

With that said, I am the representative of a riding with a large rural population. I must question how lawful firearms could be affected by amendments this bill makes to the Export and Import Permits Act. Legal firearms in Canada are subject to an extensive, strict regulatory regime. The Firearms Act regulates the transportation, storage, and display of legal firearms by individuals. It also mandates the possession and acquisition licence. Further, firearms are currently listed in the Export and Import Permits Act as a controlled import.

Despite the government's assurance that the proposed changes will not impact the legitimate and lawful use of sporting firearms, the implementation of brokering controls and permits is yet another addition to the substantial regulatory system already in place. The new brokering permits seem to cover everything related to firearms, including accessories such as optics.

Government Orders

The first question that this bill raises is this: what additional bureaucratic burden might the brokering permit application place on the Canadian firearms industry?

It remains unclear what specific documentation will be required to apply for the permit. As a first step, the government should provide assurances to firms that are compliant with the existing regulations. They need to know that the new brokering permit requirement will not render them unable to continue their businesses.

● (1250)

Also notable is the government's commitment to establishing a brokering control list that exceeds the Arms Trade Treaty requirements by covering more goods and technology.

I assume this promise is an indication of the government's earnest desire to contribute to the Arms Trade Treaty objectives. However, the government should be aware that this promise raises yet more questions for lawful Canadian firearms owners and organizations who are unclear on what the ultimate result of a more expansive list might be.

Bill C-47 would also require that all documentation pertaining to the application for a brokering permit be retained for six years, yet again the bill leaves the question unanswered as to what documentation will be required.

We only recently removed the wasteful debacle that was the long-gun registry. I am sure the government can understand that the lawful firearms community is wary of any provision that mandates data collection without giving any indication of what data will actually be collected.

For example, will any consumer data form part of the documentation required to obtain a permit? Here, too, there is an opportunity for the government to provide some assurance to the lawful firearms community. The government should give us some sense of how the bill meets the Arms Trade Treaty obligations while still respecting legitimate trade and use of legal hunting and sporting firearms.

As the bill stands, we do not know what documentation will be required to obtain a brokering permit under the new system. We do not know what goods or technology might be added to the brokering control list at the minister's discretion. We do not know what documentation will need to be retained for the mandated six year period. This makes it difficult to appraise its potential impact on the lawful firearms community.

The government's former minister of foreign affairs stated that brokering controls would be a new regulatory area for Canada, and a good example of where we are adding rigour to the existing system. The rigorous new regulatory area being added to the existing program needs far more explanation.

With all of these questions up in the air, it is incredible the Liberals conducted little or no consultation with the lawful Canadian firearms community before introducing this legislation.

Beyond the unanswered questions I have already asked, does the government know the cost to the firearms industry of adapting to the new brokering control permits? There is a serious potential for the

loss of jobs as manufacturers and importers transition to the new regulations.

If the government had consulted with lawful firearms community stakeholders, it would know that the questions I pose in my remarks are important to that community. It is a large Canadian demographic already subject to a strict regulatory environment.

Our former Conservative government declined to sign the Arms Trade Treaty specifically because there were concerns about how it might affect lawful and responsible firearms owners. The United Nations refused to exempt civilian firearms from the treaty. The government's own assessment found that Canada was already meeting the vast majority of Arms Trade Treaty obligations, but still the Liberals have opted to sign on.

The government likes to say the treaty will have no impact on law-abiding civilian firearms usage. Why then are civilian firearms even included in the treaty? Why was the United Nations against exempting them? It makes one wonder.

As a result of the Arms Trade Treaty not explicitly protecting the rights of law-abiding firearms owners, it is the responsibility of the government to provide assurance it will meet its obligations without overly impinging on the lawful Canadian firearms community. I look forward to the government doing the right thing, and demonstrating some openness to working with lawful firearms community stakeholders.

This legislation is designed to meet the obligations of a treaty that has lumped in hunting rifles with large calibre artillery systems. The government needs to listen to lawful firearm owners to mitigate the potential damage the bill might do.

● (1255)

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the member's concern over domestic implications here, we have been firmly assured there would be no such implications to domestic users. Canada has, however, in the past 25 years sold \$5.8 billion in weapons to countries with questionable human rights records. Acceding to this treaty should have a profound effect over reducing such undesirable trade.

Would the member opposite not agree that acceding to this treaty would be a good and desirable public outcome?

● (1300)

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, it is always something we would want to do, as I said in my statement. We are absolutely opposed to weapons used by terrorists in areas of the world where destruction is happening.

In this country, we have a tremendous number of people who use them appropriately and very lawfully. Those are the rights we are looking to protect, of those people who are lawful, legal gun owners in this country. Those are the rights we want to protect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question.

Government Orders

I listened carefully to my colleague's speech as he talked about the positives and negatives of the bill that is before us. I am concerned not only about the positives and negatives of the bill but also about what is missing from it. I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about the fact that the bill makes no mention of the export assessment criteria.

Does my colleague agree that these criteria should be an integral part of the bill rather than part of future regulations?

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, it is always troubling in the sense of when broad policy documents are passed as laws, and the regulations are written later without that unknown.

That is one of the biggest challenges that lawful, legal gun owners have with this particular piece of legislation. It is the unknown in the sense of those regulations, the requiring of documentation, and privacy. It would be great if we were able to see some of that information as we go forward, rather than it being done afterward.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one issue that the member raised was the list of controlled goods, and some questions and concerns about what is on it. The member should know that the list of controlled goods is available online. It is the same list that was used under the former government.

Does the member feel that the list of controlled goods used under his government went too far, and does he disagree with the list of controlled goods, and the process for determining that list that his government used when it was in power two years ago?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been very good at delivering questions, and I appreciate that. When the list includes large artillery pieces of equipment, tanks, as well as hand guns and small weapons, that is a little concerning.

When the United Nations would not exempt legal, lawful gun owners of those small guns in this country, that is the problem. It would not exempt it, and that is why we did not sign it before. It is in the list, and that is our problem.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a private member's motion in the last Parliament. It specifically addressed the ATT and our not signing on to the particular agreement, and not being a part of it in the form that it was currently in. It was Motion No. 589 which stated:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) Canada already exceeds all the standards listed in United Nations resolution 55/255 concerning firearms (the resolution); (b) the regulations envisioned in the resolution would do nothing to enhance public safety, and would serve only to burden the law-abiding firearms community; and therefore, the government has already surpassed its obligations with respect to the resolution and is not required to take any further steps.

I mention that today because the same problems that existed when I presented my private member's motion in the last Parliament still exist to this very day. What needs to be understood by a couple of our friends who maybe are not part of the firearms community out in Canada today, and they are watching, is that Canada already has an extremely good system in terms of monitoring the sales and permitting sales of military equipment around the world.

The trade controls bureau regulates the Export and Import Permits Act, which, since 1947, has allowed the minister to prevent the supply of military equipment to countries for a variety of reasons,

including security threats, internal and external conflicts, or sanctions by the United Nations. That is already in place, and Canada already abides by that and uses it effectively.

I will bring the question back to the firearms community. Why not exclude the firearms community from this particular Arms Trade Treaty? We would maybe have broad agreement throughout the firearms community that it would not be such a bad thing, but since it is not exempted, it would become a big problem for firearms owners.

I will bring this all back to pre-election 2015. The Liberal Party promised it would not reinstitute a firearms registry in Canada. It was a very hot topic for the Liberals. There were many rural Canadians who were upset by a firearms registry, and it was a big problem for the government because the prior Liberal government was the one that brought it in.

It was not a very popular piece of legislation. Pre-election, the Liberals said they were not going to do this again. The minister, by all his actions, is showing the exact opposite. He is just trying to do it through the back door, and we have mentioned it many times. My colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe and I mentioned this before when this was brought forward in the House. With Bill C-47, there is a real desire to bring in a back door registry without saying so.

I will read out some of the parts of what this bill would actually require. This is Bill C-47 for all those in Canada watching. They can see the actual act. I am going to read what it would require of business owners who sell long guns and firearms. It would require them to keep records.

It states:

Every person or organization that applies for a permit, import allocation, export allocation, certificate or other authorization under this Act shall keep all records that are necessary to determine whether they have complied with this Act.

If company X is a company that sells firearms, it might export and sell them to somebody from the U.S. who buys them. This would then apply to that company's database. I might go in and buy a firearm from this particular company, and this is a question that some have asked. What limitations are there to access the records of that particular company? Are all records accessible? For every firearm that was bought and sold, is the record accessible? Because the bill does not exclude firearms owners or long-gun owners, it really says that all databases would be made available to the minister.

I will talk about some more things in the actual act, and why we have problems with it. Under electronic records, the bill states:

Every person or organization that is required to keep a record and that does so electronically shall ensure that all equipment and software necessary to make the record intelligible are available during the retention period required for the record.

Those are computers, so they need to be accessible. Under inadequate records, the bill states:

If a person or organization fails to keep adequate records for the purposes of this Act, the Minister may, in writing, require them to keep any records that the Minister may specify, and they shall keep the records specified by the Minister.

Government Orders

Those are not some records; those are any records.

• (1305)

The period for retention is another issue with firearms communities. Is it just for a week? Is it just for a certain period of time? It is actually much longer than a week. The bill states:

Every person or organization that is required to keep records shall retain them until the expiry of six years after the end of the year to which they relate or for any other period that may be prescribed by regulation.

It could be up to seven years. Firearms companies such as a little local firearms store in my community's backcountry, like Corlanes in Dawson Creek, because they are exporters and importers, would be required by the minister of public safety and this Parliament to have accessible records of those sales. It sure sounds like a firearms registry to me.

Let us get to the bottom of it, where this is all coming from is demand by the minister. The bill states:

If the Minister is of the opinion that it is necessary for the administration or enforcement of this Act, the Minister may, by a demand served personally or sent by mail, require any person or organization that is required to keep records to retain those records for any period that is specified in the demand, and the person or organization shall comply with the demand.

There it is. There is the back door registry. The minister has already talked about, in another piece of legislation that is coming before us very soon, handing over the previous firearms registry data to a province in this country. It seems that on one hand he reassured his electorate, especially those in Saskatchewan who sent him back to Ottawa, that there would never be a firearms registry brought forward again by a Liberal government, but here we have two examples—today, in Bill C-47 and next in Bill C-58—of doing the exact opposite. That is why our firearms community is so concerned.

We saw it was ineffective the last time it was brought in. It was very expensive and it was putting the focus on the wrong individuals. I am a firearms owner myself. I do it lawfully. I have been trained in how to safely fire and handle restricted firearms, non-restricted firearms, etc. For people who obey the law and do it properly, this is unneeded attention on a community of people who safely and lawfully buy and sell firearms and do it as part of our history.

I have a pin on my lapel. I am co-chair of the parliamentary outdoor caucus. I do that with my colleague across the way. We support hunters, anglers, outfitters, trappers, etc. We support the historic events that really started this country. It started with the fur trade. A lot of my constituents still hunt, trap, and fish. I like to do that when I have time to get out there. These kinds of laws have a negative effect on those communities, because we put the focus on them as if they are criminals already, when they have done nothing wrong. All they have done is chosen to buy a firearm to go hunt and provide food for their family.

The crux of my argument today is that the Liberal government said it was not going to bring in a firearms registry. The Liberals said it over and over again, because it was a big deal to a lot of their constituents. A lot of rural folks elected Liberal members of Parliament with the reassurance that it would not happen, and here we have a minister and a government that is trying to do that. From

one back door or another, it is determined to get a firearms registry re-established in the country.

We need to come into this with our eyes wide open. Voters who are watching this today need to understand this is a big deal. This is why we did not accede to the Arms Trade Treaty when we were in government. It was because it did not have exclusions for firearm owners written within our particular act. My private member's bill spoke to that. It was one more reason why we did not accede to it.

I challenge the government to have a sober second thought and look at this again. We implore the government not to accede to the ATT. We already have enough regulations and laws that get to the same end the ATT is trying to get to in terms of selling military equipment across the world. The Liberals should especially think about the firearm owners to whom they promised they would not start a registry. Hopefully, the government will not support this legislation today.

• (1310)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and good friend for his intervention and advocacy, particularly with the outdoor caucus work he does, bringing a lot more Canadians into contact with their Parliament on issues that concern them. There is one thing I want to raise and would like him to comment on.

The parliamentary secretary, in his speech on this bill, suggested that any concerns, even minor concerns, from the hunting community, sports shooters, even indigenous Canadians who engage in those things sometimes, on their constitutional rights to hunt, are “bogus”. This is his language. I would like the member to comment, in light of the fact that the previous government suggested to the UN that a carve out specifically in the treaty, carving out the lawful use of firearms by hunters and sports shooters, was rejected.

Would the member comment on how unfair it is for the parliamentary secretary to suggest that concern about the rejection of that carve out is somehow bogus? That is divisive language that often pits rural Canada against urban Canada. Could the member, in his experience working with the community, comment on just that style of approach?

• (1315)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, “bogus” is certainly language I would not use to refer to the concerns of this community. We are talking about doctors, lawyers, professionals, carpenters, and mechanics who are all part of the hunting community and are advocates against what this particular piece of legislation is trying to collect. I suggest that the government really needs to listen a lot more closely to that particular community. The government made promises to this particular community that it was not going to bring in a registry, and by bringing Bill C-47 in through the back door, that is exactly what it is doing.

This seems to be the government's attitude when it chooses language like the word “bogus” with this particular community. This community has said loudly that it does not want a registry, and I think it is prepared to speak loudly again. I just hope the member is prepared for that.

Government Orders

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I look at the legislation before the House, as someone who represents a partially rural riding and whose constituency office is across the hall from the licensing agency for hunters in my province, I am quite satisfied that this legislation addresses two key components that allow us to live up to our multilateral commitments to the international community: first, controlling the brokerage and, second, looking at our export controls to make sure we meet our international commitments to help control the international distribution of illegal arms. I do not see anything here that directly affects domestic hunters and gun users. They are protected. I am satisfied that the preamble recognizes legitimate trade and lawful ownership of recreational, cultural, and sporting activities associated with guns. I am quite satisfied that it does this.

Can the member point to something particular in the legislation that actually affects the hunters and gun users themselves? I feel that we have struck the right balance here.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, the member asked, so I will give him that information. I read it already. I do not know if he was in the House when I read it earlier. This is Bill C-47.

I am sorry; I cannot recognize whether he was in the House or not. It was my mistake.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Speaker, irrespective of whether I was here, I certainly did hear it. My question is actually about the gun users and owners themselves, not the brokers.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I will answer his question. I just was not sure, because I read it out before. I was just being clear.

This is the actual bill. I could read what it states under, "Keeping records", but I do not have the time to do that. I have it right here and it is even highlighted in yellow. After we have finished the debate, I will show the member the actual problems with the firearms community. There are two key parts. It is the fact that these companies would now be required to collect records of firearms sales, which includes long guns and handguns. That is a registry. When we got rid of the firearms registry, it was a big deal to a lot of Canadians. The Liberal government said it would never re-establish the long-gun registry. This is establishing a new long-gun registry.

If that is the question, I think you need to go back and talk to some of your firearms owners and maybe some in your firearms community and ask if it is a big deal that they collect records again, because I am pretty sure it is.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to debate, I want to remind hon. members to speak in the third person and not directly to the speaker. I appreciate their taking the time to speak to me, but I do not believe the question or comments are really directed at me.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a delight for me to stand in the House again after a wonderful summer break to address the House on a very important issue. This is an issue that the Liberals sprinkled out at a time when they were introducing bills with much more severe and longer impacting consequences, with the hope that probably this bill would just be swept under the carpet and

maybe not given the attention it deserved. In fact, I believe it does deserve a lot of attention.

By way of background, in 2016, the Liberals announced that Canada would accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. Subsequently, Bill C-47 was introduced to that end. The bill would effect changes in several different ways. First, it would establish controls over brokering in military goods between two countries outside of Canada. Second, it would create a legal obligation for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to consider certain assessment criteria before authorizing permits. Finally, it would increase the maximum fine under the Export and Import Permits Act from \$25,000 to \$250,000 for summary conviction offences. However, since the 1940s, under the Trade Controls Bureau, we already have provisions for Canada to do exactly what the bill is addressing.

Before I go any further, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

As hon. members will recall, our previous Conservative government refused to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, because we were concerned about how the treaty would effectively be responsible to law-abiding gun owners. These concerns are just as real today as they were at that time. Conservatives have always supported efforts to establish international standards for the trade of arms, which help prevent illicit transfers that fuel conflict and encourage terrorism or organized crime. Unfortunately, without providing protection for law-abiding gun owners included in the text of the ATT, I cannot support the bill.

In fact, we already have in place the things that the bill attempts to do. Our government is already abiding by that through the Trade Controls Bureau, as I mentioned earlier. We take very seriously the trade of arms between other countries, to make sure they are not going into regimes that support terrorism or that fuel conflict by way of countries that should not be receiving these types of arms.

As parliamentarians, our first responsibility is to protect the rights of Canadians. The Government of Canada has a duty to ensure that the rights of Canadians are not outsourced to foreign countries. Unfortunately, the Liberals are refusing to acknowledge the potential infringements on law-abiding gun owners that could come as a result of participation in the ATT. Bill C-47 would require records to be kept on Canadian firearm owners who have imported or exported their guns or else face stiff fines of up to \$250,000 or even imprisonment. This provision would have a direct impact on those who participate in lawful recreational and hunting activities that involve firearms.

Government Orders

What is most disconcerting about Bill C-47 is that it represents an attempt by the Liberal government to revive the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry, which was eliminated by our previous Conservative government. Bill C-47 would allow for the government to create regulations that demand firearm importers and exporters to report and keep all of their import registry data for at least—

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members in the House. It is nice to see everybody getting along, but there are a lot of side discussions going on, and I am having a hard time hearing this very interesting discourse from the hon. member.

Now that I have reminded everyone, I am sure everything will be quiet, and I will let the hon. member continue.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I, too, thought what I had to say was very interesting. I appreciate the fact that you have brought attention to that.

Bill C-47 would also allow governments to create regulations that would demand firearm importers to report and keep all their import registry data for at least six years and have it available to government. In its simplest form, this is the start of a backdoor firearms registry. It would force the information of individuals to be registered with importers and sellers and be available to government. It sounds pretty much like a registry to me.

Moreover, these proposals will add costs onto the manufacturers and distributors of legal firearms, which will ultimately be passed down to the consumers, the purchasers of firearms. Somebody has to pay for this extra cost that will be incurred with Bill C-47.

When our previous Conservative government was in office, we listened to Canadians and eliminated the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry. Instead of treating law-abiding firearms owners like criminals, we repealed the requirement to register non-restricted fire arms, long guns, rifles, shotguns, and provided for the destruction of all records pertaining to that registry held by the Canadian Firearms Registry under the control of the chief firearms officer.

While we removed the need to hold a registration certificate for non-restricted firearms, this did not change the requirement for individuals to hold a valid firearms licence in order to acquire or possess a firearm. They also had to pass the required Canadian firearms safety course, undergo a screening process, and obtain a registration certificate for restricted and prohibited firearms such as handguns. Through these changes, we recognized that recreational firearms users were not criminals. At the same time, we ensured that appropriate measures were taken to maintain public safety through licensing and gun safety education.

Acceding to the ATT could impose another burdensome bureaucracy on Canada that would mirror the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry our previous Conservative government eliminated. The same problems that we had with the gun registry, the lack of accountability, the immense costs, and the overall uselessness of it, are highly likely again under the ATT regime, unless amendments are made to it.

Interestingly, through Bill C-47, the Liberals are trying to bring back the registry through the backdoor with as little attention as possible.

The Liberals have a tendency to do this, introduce proposals they know will not be accepted by Canadians at a time when they hope it will go unnoticed. Take their recent massive tax hikes on local small businesses, farmers, and professionals as an example. The Liberals waited until the middle of the summer to sprinkle out these proposals when they figured Canadians were enjoying time with family and friends or perhaps were out of town on vacation. Of course, they made the consultation period run right through the fall harvest season, which would severely impact the ability of farmers to interact and contribute to the discussion on this very important proposal before us.

In a similar fashion, when this backdoor gun registry bill was introduced, the Liberals hoped that no one would hear about it. They introduced it at the same time as their marijuana legislation, both Bill C-45 and Bill C-46, the day before the Easter long weekend. The expectation here was clearly that this bill would fall under the radar while the marijuana bills dominated the discussion and the news cycle.

Whenever the Liberals insist on pushing forward with an agenda they know Canadians will not stand behind, this is their standard way of going about it. However, if they know Canadians do not support this legislation, as evidenced by the fact they are trying to keep it as low profile as possible, why are they trying to pass it at all?

Canada's export regime as it stands today is already among the strongest in the world. I think the Liberals would agree on that point. Canadian governments of all political stripes have always ensured Canadian values are reflected in export decisions and have taken steps to prevent illicit transfers that fuel conflict, encourage terrorism, or organized crime. It seems to me this is another Liberal solution in search of a problem. If it were benign, it would be one thing, but because it has the potential to negatively impact law-abiding Canadian farmers and hunters, we as Conservatives must speak out against this.

• (1325)

The Conservatives have taken a clear and principled stand. We believe that any arms trade treaty should recognize and acknowledge the legitimacy of lawful ownership of firearms by responsible citizens for their personal and recreational use. This includes Canadian heritage activities, such as hunting, sport shooting, and collecting. More than that, the legitimacy of these activities are recognized around the world, including those state parties to the ATT. Our previous Conservative government insisted that this be a part of any serious treaty on this subject.

For the Liberals to move ahead with this legislation without having received such a basic concession is disappointing. The Prime Minister may believe it will help him secure the United Nations Security Council seat that he wants so badly, but to do so would be at the expense of the rights of Canadian gun owners.

Government Orders

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, continuing on from the conversation that we had earlier with the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies and now the member for Provencher, I would share the concerns held by my colleagues if I felt there would be an increased burden on gun users and gun owners.

However, when I look at the legislation itself, we are talking about brokers and export controls. These are not things that the ordinary, everyday gun user or gun owner is concerned about. Looking at the type of information we are talking about collecting, it is my understanding that this information has been collected for over 70 years. Since 1942, the Government of Canada has required records on export and import of arms.

When I look at what the legislation would do, it would allow us to engage multilaterally with our partners to the Arms Trade Treaty. It is a wonderful thing. I do not see an increased burden in any way. If we look at the risk associated with information that was collected in the past, under the previous government, and what is proposed under this legislation, it is the same.

Again, I would ask the member opposite, as I did the previous member, this. What exactly is here now that you disagree with, that you simply agreed with before? It is same information that has always been collected.

•(1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind everyone to address their questions through to the Chair and not directly.

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, what impact will this have on Canadians?

The extra burden of keeping those additional records, storing them and maintaining them for six years, is an additional burden. If it were not an additional burden, it would not be something that would be extra. There is going to be a cost to that. There will also be a cost to manufacturers to ensure they are compliant as well.

Any additional costs that will be incurred by exporters, importers, or manufacturers will ultimately to be passed on to the consumer, to law-abiding Canadians who want to do their sport shooting, hunt, or perhaps just want to be collectors. That is a cost and a burden that will be incurred.

It is also a registry that is currently not being kept. Under the Trade Controls Bureau, we have processes in place for the sale and purchase of arms to other countries. We also have processes and procedures in place under that bureau that protect the integrity of the sale of arms to other nations.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to have side conversations with other members in the Conservative caucus.

To me, it is quite clear that Bill C-47 is entirely about arms trade. It is entirely about export of armaments. It has no application to domestic sale of long guns or guns of any kind.

It is unfortunate we are having this conversation in the House, because I think it could unnecessarily alarm people, including people in my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands who are long-gun

owners and gun owners and who do not want these imaginary burdens that the Conservatives imagine are created by the bill.

I will try to explain it, if I can, for my friends in the Conservative caucus. When we go through the bill, the structure is clear. Everything in the bill is related to amendments to permit accession to the Arms Trade Treaty. My question for the Liberals, if I had a chance to put it, would be about the huge loopholes that have been left on the sale of arms.

However, going back to the concern about legitimate hunters, “broker” is defined only in terms of export and import of armaments. The list that is concerning people, which is found in paragraph 10.3 of the bill, “keeping records”, only applies to those, under the purpose of the bill, keeping records necessary to determine if they have complied with an act which is about the export of armaments that could be used by terrorist organizations around the world.

If my hon. colleague were satisfied, as I am satisfied, that there was no way this bill could have any impact on domestic owners, would the member please agree that it would be better for the world to limit the sale of armaments?

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is always very thorough in her evaluation of bills, and I have great respect for the work she does in the House.

However, I disagree with her on the point that it does not affect individuals and organizations. Section 7.1(1) in the agreement clearly states that individuals and organizations will be subject to that agreement, so that will directly require the information of individuals to be recorded and kept in a registry.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-47, an act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code. In essence, what Bill C-47 would do is implement the Arms Trade Treaty, which was signed by the government.

Without more, I oppose Bill C-47 for two broad reasons.

First, I am not satisfied that the Arms Trade Treaty and Bill C-47, the implementation of that treaty, would actually strengthen Canada's arms control regime.

Second, I oppose the bill because of serious concerns and questions that have been asked by law-abiding firearms owners and users in our country, concerns and questions that the Liberal government has refused to answer with respect to whether the legislation would result in a backdoor gun registry.

I will first address the issue about whether the bill would actually strengthen Canada's arms control regime. The fact is that Canada has long had a very strong arms control regime. It is a regime that has been in place for about 70 years. It is a regime that is robust. Canada is a leader when it comes to arms control with respect to our export regime.

Government Orders

As the hon. member for Durham highlighted in some detail, the scope of the that regime includes the Trade Controls Bureau, which has operated since 1947. What does the Trade Controls Bureau do? It governs, tracks, and controls the export of military weapons and arms out of Canada. It has worked very well. Under the import and export regime that Canada has with respect to arms control, the items subject to control are listed. They include military weapons, nuclear, chemical, biological materials, among other things. Canada does not just list those items subject to control; it tracks the export of controlled items. We track it by way of the CBSA, through Statistics Canada, and we track it in a very robust way, one that is consistent with international standards, including the World Customs Organization. That is the standard by which Canada tracks. While Canada tracks, one of the things lacking in the Arms Trade Treaty, as the member for Durham correctly pointed out, is transparency and tracking.

We then not only have the Trade Controls Bureau, we also have what is called an “Area Control List” that, by way of order in council, can block the export of not only weapons but anything from Canada to another country. Right now, North Korea is on that list.

• (1335)

What we have is again a very strong and very robust regime. It is one that has worked and is working. There are questions about whether this bill would in fact improve upon what Canada has. However, in some respects it would water it down. I cannot support a piece of legislation that arguably would weaken the very good regime that Canada already has.

As has been raised by a number of hon. members in the House, there are serious questions about whether this bill would, through the back door, re-establish a gun registry. We know of course what a disaster the long-gun registry was, as introduced by the previous Liberal government. It was a registry that targeted law-abiding firearms owners, cost the taxpayers of Canada some \$2 billion, and did absolutely nothing to prevent firearms from getting into the hands of criminals. On the contrary, it in fact made the situation worse by creating a black market for various firearms. When the firearms community, every firearms organization in Canada, unanimously raises questions about whether this bill would impede law-abiding firearms owners by way of a back-door firearms registry, those concerns have to be taken seriously. However, instead of listening to the firearms community, instead of consulting with law-abiding firearms owners, the current government would prefer just to dismiss them out of hand.

I heard my friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the member for Fredericton, when he stood up in the House. I respect that hon. member, but he asserted that the claim that acceding to the treaty would create a back-door gun registry was phony and bogus. I say let us look at the language of the Arms Trade Treaty and Bill C-47. Let us start with article 2.

Article 2 states:

This Treaty shall apply to all conventional arms within the following categories

It then lists a whole series of categories. At the end, article 2.1(h) refers to small arms. Small arms include any firearm that could be operated and used by an individual, so it would include a rifle or any

number of firearms that are lawfully used by Canadians for civilian recreational purposes every single day.

We then go to article 12, which says:

Each State Party shall maintain national records, pursuant to its national laws and regulations...[in terms of] conventional arms covered under Article 2.

As I mentioned, article 2 includes small arms.

We then go to Bill C-47 and look at the substance of it, and we see, among other sections of this bill, proposed subsection 10.3(6), which says that every person or organization under the act, which would include a broker, is required to retain records for a period of some six years.

• (1340)

Bill C-47 goes a lot further than that because it provides for the specific manner in which those electronic records must be kept by way of an electronic database.

I see I am out of time, but it raises very serious questions about this issue. I would be happy to pick up from where I left off in questions and answers.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that the hon. member understands that the treaty really deals with the illicit conventional arms trade. That illicit arms trade puts vulnerable people at risk around the world. The ATT is the only treaty that really tries to tackle the issue of illicit arms trading.

How can Canada contribute to fighting the illicit arms trade if we are not party to the only treaty that addresses this issue?

• (1345)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, simply put, it is not this bill that will do that. This bill will potentially target law-abiding firearms holders.

As I alluded to, Canada already has a very robust regime in place, one that is working. Second, on the issue of whether it would establish a back door firearms registry, one of the questions I would have of the government is where is the language in the treaty that would exclude firearms for civilian purposes? It is nowhere to be found. What we have are clauses that are vague, overly broad, ambiguous, and raise more questions than answers.

The hunters, anglers, and fishermen of our country that use firearms for recreational purposes every single day deserve a lot more from the government.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member to expand on some of the concerns we have heard today around the fact that a lot of the guts of the bill will be brought in as regulations after the bill receives royal assent, regulations on some of the important criteria the minister will be obligated to use to assess these export applications.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a good point because what we are actually going to see in the bill with respect to the export regime is less transparency, less openness, and less accountability than the existing regime in place.

Government Orders

Again, it raises questions about Bill C-47. It is a bill that arguably waters down the existing regime, and as the hon. member points out, raises questions about openness and transparency with respect to exports.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we hear many Liberal members, including the parliamentary secretary, suggesting that even a simple question on the application of the bill to hunters and sport shooters is somehow, to quote the parliamentary secretary, “bogus” or “phony”. This member and a number of other members have raised some valid questions that hunters and sport shooters have because a carve-out for civilian users was rejected in the negotiation of this treaty.

I would like my friend to comment on how a simple question about the bill's application is a bogus argument that creates divisions between rural and urban Canadians and really belittles debate in the House. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. There has been a lack of a carve-out. As a result, it has created some very legitimate concerns in light of the vague and ambiguous language contained in the bill.

The Liberals should not have signed the treaty before they got that carve-out. That was the position of our government. Even if they went ahead and signed the treaty, at the very least they could have included language in Bill C-47 to raise objections to any interpretation that would result in the application of the treaty to civilian recreational firearms users in Canada.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

I am happy to rise here today to speak in this debate on Bill C-47, the legislation that is meant to meet Canada's obligation to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

This treaty came into force in 2014. The previous Conservative government refused to join the majority of countries around the world and sign this treaty. Indeed, it was the only government within NATO and the G7 to refuse to do so. I and my colleagues within the NDP are happy to see the government now move ahead to join most of the civilized world in acceding to the Arms Trade Treaty. Therefore, we will support sending Bill C-47 on to committee. We have several concerns about the bill that I hope will be fixed with amendments in committee, and I will expand on a couple of those concerns.

I represent the riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay, which has a long history of pacifism. Part of that history involves the strong Doukhobor communities in parts of the West Kootenay and Kootenay Boundary regions. The Doukhobors came to Canada in the early 1900s, seeking a refuge to practise their belief in pacifism and living their motto of “peace and toil”. In the 1960s, another wave of pacifists came to southern B.C. in the form of American draft dodgers, who left their homes and families to avoid conscription into the Vietnam War.

This history has created several very active, key groups promoting peace in my riding. There is the Boundary Peace Initiative, and the Kootenay region branch of the United Nations Association. Another

peace initiative in my riding is the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College in Castlegar, which provides a diploma program in peace and justice studies, as well as an international program in unarmed civilian peacekeeping. These groups and others like them are celebrating the International Day of Peace today across Canada. While I wish I could be with them in person in the riding, I am happy to celebrate the day with this debate. I am proud to represent a riding with such strong interest in peaceful solutions to world conflicts and to speak here today about efforts to regulate the trade in military material.

However, residents of my riding are not alone in their concern about arms trade. Polls show that the majority of Canadians do not want our country to export military equipment to countries with a history of human rights abuses. Many Canadians would be surprised to learn that our country has almost doubled its military exports in the last 10 years and that we are the world's second-largest arms dealer to the Middle East. This kind of involvement in such an explosive region makes it difficult to increase our role as a trusted peacemaker anywhere in the world.

Where does Bill C-47 fall short?

First of all, exports from Canada to the United States would be exempt from the Export and Import Permits Act as amended by the bill. This is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Arms Trade Treaty, which calls for a complete and transparent coverage of all military exports. Fully half of our military exports go to the United States. The government has argued that the U.S. is a trusted ally and we should not need to regulate arms trade to our neighbour, but I see two problems with that stance. First, the U.S. has not ratified this Arms Trade Treaty and so has no obligation to track trade in military products. Second, the present administration in the U.S., I think it is fair to say, has a very different stance on trade with a number of countries that Canada has expressed concerns about. Therefore, material and parts for military systems sold by Canadian companies to the U.S. could be incorporated into equipment there and sold anywhere in the world without it being tracked through the Arms Trade Treaty.

Another concern we have is that important parts of our legal obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty will only be enacted through regulation. These include the legal obligation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to assess permits using certain criteria.

● (1350)

Unfortunately, these criteria will only be revealed through regulation after the bill receives royal assent. In other words, we here in this place will not have any role in debating those criteria, and they could arguably be an important part of the law.

Statements by Members

As I said at the beginning, the NDP supports the bill at this stage. Any efforts to control, regulate, and monitor the export of military equipment can only be a step forward to a more peaceful world.

The NDP has a strong history of supporting and promoting initiatives for peace around the world, and we were very disappointed when the Liberal government refused to take part in the recent UN negotiations toward a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

The Prime Minister said in question period earlier this week that the NDP is always ready with “well-meaning platitudes”, or at least that is how it was translated in *Hansard*. In the verbal translation we heard here, that came out as “we were ready with lovely words”. What the NDP is concerned about with respect to Bill C-47 is that it is in fact just lovely words. It does not fully meet the Arms Trade Treaty obligations.

We hope that the government will seriously consider amendments at committee stage to fix these problems so that Canada can fully live up to its agreements on the world stage and truly make the world a more peaceful place.

• (1355)

Hon. Erin O’Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned why his party is supporting the bill today, but clearly he has also been paying attention to the debate in the House, and I appreciate that.

Does my colleague feel the language that the parliamentary secretary used in introducing the bill, when he suggested that basic concerns that some Canadians might have are either “phony” or “bogus”, is a good way to advance questions that Canadians have, such as hunters, sport shooters, and indigenous Canadians, who have a constitutional right to hunt? Answering those questions is a debate we should have as a part of the bill.

Does he think the tone used by the Liberals with respect to the introduction of the bill seeks to divide the rural parts of Canada that he and I represent from the urban parts?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken over the last couple of years with a number of hunting and sport shooting groups in my riding about their concerns with not just this bill but with other bills that they feel are perhaps coming at their rights as gun owners through the back door. I am not really convinced that the bill is set out to do that in a meaningful way, although it might open up that concern.

We have heard concerns about vague wording. We have heard comments from Conservative members that they would like to see wording within the bill, perhaps in the preamble, that sets this out. I have heard from the Liberals that there is wording in the preamble, but I could not find it myself.

These are comments that we should hear at committee, and I hope that we can resolve this issue to allay those fears.

The Speaker: The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay will have three minutes when the House resumes after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in his last letter to Canadians, read into this record by the hon. member for Ajax, Arnold Chan left us with these words:

Climate change is undeniably the focus of attention today, as it should be. The recent flooding in Texas, hurricane in the Caribbean and Florida, violent monsoon rains in Bangladesh and northern India, and closer to home, the BC wildfires all point to an increasingly unpredictable and potentially destructive pattern of changes....

He went on to say:

Climate change is not just about storms, flooding and heat. It is also about crop failure, food shortage, water scarcity, mass displacement of people.... It is imperative that we stop treating climate change as solely an environmental issue, but recognize it as an all-encompassing priority.

We are in a time of climate emergency.

* * *

• (1400)

MULTICULTURALISM IN KING—VAUGHAN

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Canada’s vibrant multicultural mosaic. My riding of King—Vaughan is a shining example of Canada’s diversity, where people from all around the world live together in harmony and prosperity, celebrating our different cultures and traditions.

Recently I had the opportunity to attend an Eid al-Adha, the celebration of the sacrifice, which provides Muslims an opportunity to reaffirm their faith and gather together as a community.

Other celebrations held in my riding are Navratri, a festival thanking the Durga goddess, who is the personification of female strength and the dispenser of justice, and Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

[Translation]

I invite all members of the House to join me in wishing all Canadians *Eid Mubarak*, happy *Navratri*, and *Shana Tova*.

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NEUVILLE CORN

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the first week of the fall sitting. We are just getting back from our respective ridings, and I am sure we are all ready to get back to work in the House of Commons.

*Statements by Members***FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY**

One of our roles, as MPs, is to promote our ridings, their residents, their attractions, and their local products. Did my colleagues know that Neuville was once known as the breadbasket of New France? Farmers there perpetuated the cultivation of a unique and distinct product, Neuville's famous corn.

This summer, the Quebec department of agriculture granted the Association des producteurs de maïs sucré de Neuville protected geographical indication status, or PGI, a designation that confirms the unique properties of this product.

I invite my colleagues to come get their Neuville corn after question period. It is freshly picked and comes directly from Neuville. I am very proud to share this delicious local product found exclusively in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier with them.

* * *

ISMAILI CIVIC 150

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ismaili Civic 150 is an initiative engaging members of Canada's Ismaili community to pledge one million volunteer service hours across Canada to improve the lives of their fellow citizens.

Ismaili Civic 150 celebrates the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, Montreal's 375th anniversary, and the diamond jubilee of the Ismaili spiritual leader, His Highness the Aga Khan.

Canada has been home to nearly 100,000 Ismailis since the mid-1960s, and about 3,000 of them live in Brossard—Saint-Lambert. Ismailis everywhere are known for their deep commitment to volunteerism and their support of humanitarian causes. Ismaili Civic 150 affirms the Ismaili Muslim community's volunteer service ethic and its commitment to making people's lives better in the countries they call home.

I would like to congratulate the Canadian Ismaili Shia Muslim community on this admirable initiative.

* * *

TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use my first statement to highlight two success stories of the kind that make Trois-Rivières such a vibrant community.

The first relates to our economy. I would like to congratulate and thank Mr. Di Bartolo, who made such a significant contribution to the development of Trois-Rivières's aerospace industry. Premier Aviation, which now belongs to AAR, just inked a major deal with Air Canada to create and keep quality jobs in Trois-Rivières.

The second has to do with politics. I take my hat off to the dozens of men and women who have engaged in the democratic process by taking part in the municipal election campaign. Their involvement helps combat cynicism about politics, and it will be my great pleasure to work with the representatives chosen by the people of Trois-Rivières.

I would like to thank all of the people who nurture our community's social, economic, and cultural development. Anything is possible when we work together.

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a proud Franco-Ontarian, I want to take this opportunity to point out that Monday, September 25, is Franco-Ontarian Day. Francophone communities in Ontario have a rich history dating back 400 years to when Samuel de Champlain explored and mapped parts of Ontario by navigating the Ottawa River and arriving by boat at the current site of the city of Ottawa in 1613.

Ottawa—Vanier has strong French ties because one of the first French colonies was located in today's Lowertown.

I am very pleased that French is still very much alive in Ottawa and across Ontario and is far from disappearing.

I invite my colleagues to take part in the activities and events that will take place this weekend and next Monday, including the celebrations at Lansdowne Park.

Happy Franco-Ontarian Day!

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

MYANMAR

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am standing in the House today to continue to bring attention to the ongoing violence in Myanmar and the plight of the Rohingya. We have seen before where this road ends when the international community does not speak up. More than enough damage has already been done.

Within our own communities, we have a responsibility to push out discrimination and speak up for our neighbours without a voice, but that responsibility extends to our role as citizens of the world as well.

There is good reason why the criticism on the “silence of the bystander” has become such a broadly shared adage. Inaction on the part of Myanmar's government has allowed this situation to deteriorate. As such, it is our—the international community's—responsibility to maintain pressure until they step in and stop the violence. I, along with many of my colleagues and many of my friends back home in Edmonton, will continue to do the same for the Rohingya as we condemn the killing of innocent people.

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CARP FAIR

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to invite you, all of my colleagues, and indeed all Canadians to “The Best Little Fair in Canada”, which takes place this weekend in the beautiful town of Carp, Ontario.

Statements by Members

The Carp Fair, now in its 154th year, celebrates agricultural excellence and is a great source of local pride in the community. There will be livestock exhibits, carnival rides and games, terrific live music, and a fantastic opportunity to sample the delicious food produced right here by local farms and vendors. I recommend the Huntley burger. I would like to thank the whole Carp Fair and its hard-working team of volunteers, who make the Carp Fair such as a huge success.

I hope that one and all accept my invitation. I would love to see everybody in Carp. Everyone should remember that if they like to eat, they should thank a farmer, and they can do it this weekend in Carp.

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POLICE AND PEACE OFFICERS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sunday is Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day.

Singing at the 11 a.m. memorial service on Parliament Hill, as they have for many years, will be the 57 men of the Waterloo Regional Police Male Chorus. The Waterloo Regional Police Male Chorus has been entertaining people in Canada, the U.S., and Europe for 44 years. They are true ambassadors of the Waterloo Regional Police Service. They have helped to raise over \$1 million for those in need.

I wish particularly to recognize the service of the chorus's Sergeant-at-Arms, John Van Osch of Waterloo, who has been singing with the chorus for 35 years, and Rich Mader of Kitchener, who has been singing with the chorus for 23 years. Their participation is proudly supported and enabled by Sally Van Osch and Sharon Mader. I thank all of them for their participation.

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MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of an incredible young man from the riding of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

Zach Hofer, 13 years of age, was passionate about youth mental health, but realized there was a lack of programs in our region that actually provided these services. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for Canadians between the ages of 10 and 24, yet many of our young people are left without the support that they need.

Zach took it upon himself to raise awareness and funds through his initiative, Zach Makes Tracks for youth mental health.

Beginning August 13, Zach walked, ran, and biked 410 kilometres from Barrie to Ottawa, finishing his triumphant journey right here on the steps of Parliament Hill on September 10. Through the generous support of donors from across Ontario and especially in Barrie, Zach Makes Tracks raised over \$70,000 for the new youth mental health centre at the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie.

I thank Zach for inspiring Canadians, young and old, to take action. We cannot wait to see what he does next.

● (1410)

ARMENIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish Armenians around the world and in my riding of Saint-Laurent a happy Armenia Independence Day.

While there are only about 20,000 Armenians on the island of Montreal, they form a very active, tight-knit, helpful, and co-operative community. The Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Centre Communautaire Sourp Hagop, and the Notre-Dame-de-Nareg community have all welcomed and assisted many Syrian refugee families.

[Translation]

Furthermore, not only did Montreal's Armenian community insist that the Armenian genocide be recognized, but it also supported the prevention of other crimes against humanity. For a third consecutive year, our Armenian community organized the march for humanity and genocide prevention, which had thousands of participants.

[English]

I look forward to seeing Saint-Laurent Armenians at the various celebratory events this Friday and Saturday.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Peace. This year's theme is "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All". Will the Rohingya fleeing ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Myanmar regime whose State Councillor is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate join us in celebrating? The irony.

After the wars of the 20th century, over 100 million have been killed in world wars, genocides, the Holocaust, the Holodomor. Annually, we pledge "never again", yet in the 21st century we have had the genocide of Darfurians, Yazidis, and now we stand by watching the Rohingya crime against humanity.

Canada has brought together people of every race, religion, and culture. It is our multicultural Canada, a peaceful global village prototype. We have shown international leadership in peace: our Pearsonian legacy, the Ottawa treaty, the responsibility to protect doctrine.

On this day of peace, let us not just pledge peace; let us build the institutions that will create a global culture of peace.

* * *

TAIWAN

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Canada's foreign policy, the Conservative Party continues to put the fundamental Canadian values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law first. That is why Conservatives believe that we should stand up for countries and governments that value these principles.

Statements by Members

One such place is Taiwan. Canada and Taiwan have much in common, not least of which is a commitment to democracy and human rights. Something the Liberal government could do to show support for Taiwan is to make an effort to sign a foreign investment and protection agreement with it, as well as to promote Taiwan's participation in international forums like the WHO and the UN General Assembly.

This week, the General Assembly meets in New York. The PM is at the UN right now, and the opportunity is right before him.

The Taiwanese have shown strength, steadfastness, and tenacity in the face of very large and powerful adversaries. We can and should do more to show the Taiwanese that they do not stand alone.

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[Translation]

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks a new, progressive chapter in trade relations between the European Union and Canada.

[English]

With the preliminary application of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, or CETA, thousands of jobs will be created for the middle class and those working hard to join it. CETA will benefit Canadian consumers and businesses, especially small and medium-sized businesses such as Numage Trading Inc. and JK Overweel in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

[Translation]

In May, I had the opportunity to travel to Italy with the Prime Minister to discuss the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. I am very proud to help strengthen the relationship with Canada's eighth-largest trading partner.

[English]

Canada has always been a trading nation. Now, more than ever, we can benefit from economic integration and more global co-operation. CETA is the most progressive and inclusive trade deal that Canada has ever concluded. That is something we can celebrate.

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● (1415)

ALZHEIMER'S

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Alzheimer's Day.

With 747,000 Canadians currently living with dementia, and an expected 1.4 million Canadians to be living with the disease in 15 years, it is so important that we support the family members who support their loved ones.

Recently, in a town hall I held, a man in his late eighties came to speak to me about the challenges he faces in caring for his wife with Alzheimer's. He simply cannot afford to put her into a care facility. There is not enough money. "Rachel", he told me, "I am doing my best, but I am getting tired. What will happen if I get sick too?"

Too many caregivers do get sick. These people are often working one job to pay the bills, and another to care for their loved ones, or can no longer work due to caring for their loved ones, and face devastating poverty.

The NDP has always called for better support for Canadians living with Alzheimer's or dementia, and we will continue to call for a bold public health care strategy for all Canadians.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past 11 years I have spent much of my time focusing on the issues of mental health and suicide prevention. Motion No. 388, targeting online predators, passed unanimously in November of 2009, and Bill C-300, calling for a federal framework for suicide prevention, received royal assent on December 14, 2012. These are two initiatives I am proud to have championed.

I was encouraged in February of this year to receive a letter from Noah Irvine, an exceptional young man from Guelph, who unfortunately knows this issue all too well. In his letter to all members of Parliament, he challenged us to champion the cause of mental health, and to stand up for Canadians suffering with mental illness. His story of personal loss and his ongoing courage in overcoming these trials are an example to every one of us.

Noah is visiting Ottawa today. It has been my privilege to meet him and sense his ongoing commitment to this important cause. I thank Noah for his message of hope. May he keep up the good work.

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INVICTUS GAMES

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last week of September, Toronto will host the Invictus Games, and opening ceremonies Saturday night will take place in the riding that I represent.

Founded by His Royal Highness Prince Harry, the Invictus Games are the only international adaptive sporting event for ill, wounded, or injured active duty and veteran service members. The games showcase the unconquerable spirit of those who acquired a physical or mental health injury, or illness while serving their country. The strength, courage, and skills shown by these athletes are an incredible inspiration.

As these brave athletes take the field and compete, let us also turn our minds to homeless veterans, equally brave soldiers across the world, and here at home, who have no home. As our veterans show the world what they can do on home turf, let us raise our game on the home front.

We can beat homelessness. On behalf of all parliamentarians, I commit our teams to that. I also say, "Go, team Canada, go."

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***TAXATION**

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's unfair, ad hoc reform will have a major impact on our economy. It will not only kill middle-class jobs, but it will also require SMEs to reduce their contribution to the community. What does that mean? It means fewer donations to community organizations, and fewer donations to health organizations and people in need.

Does this Liberal government realize that its reform is a direct attack on honest middle-class workers who create jobs across the country?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we currently have a tax system that encourages the wealthy to incorporate so they have a lower tax rate than the middle class. Our goal is to make the system fairer. We are going to find a way to create a fair system in which SMEs can continue to make active investments in their businesses.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that 86% of entrepreneurs are against the Liberals' tax reforms. Yesterday, I told you about Joseph. After hearing his story, Pierre, Virginie, Gabriel, Nathalie, and many others contacted me because they are worried that they were never consulted. The Liberals are yet again trying to distract us while they pick business owners' pockets in an attempt to finance their own massive deficit.

Raising taxes on businesses is not going to create jobs. When is this Liberal government finally going to get the message and abandon its reforms—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our current system encourages the wealthiest Canadians to incorporate so they can get a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. Right now, we have a system where small and medium-sized businesses have the lowest tax rate among G7 countries. That is very important for our country. We want to continue with a very low tax rate. That is the truth, those are the facts. We can have both a system that is fair and a tax rate that is very low.

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey has found this week that 88% of local businesses say this new Liberal tax increase will make it harder to create jobs and grow. That means thousands of young people and new Canadians will not get that first job, and many more might be laid off.

Instead of taxing away the jobs of hard-working Canadians, why does the Minister of Finance not get his own spending under control?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those are exactly the sorts of scare tactics we expect from members on the other side. We know that the current system, a system that they were comfortable with, actually gives advantages to the richest over the middle class.

We are going to encourage people to make investments. We know that what we have done so far has led to a very successful economy, one that is helping businesses across the country and one that is creating new jobs across our country for all Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a classic case of “do as I say, but not as I do.”

Our millionaire Prime Minister confirmed these tax changes would not affect what he called his “family fortune”. The Minister of Finance made sure his billion dollar family business, Morneau Shepell, would be sheltered from any of the changes.

While the government imposes a 73% tax on small business investment income, why did it go to such lengths to ensure that the family fortunes of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister were sheltered?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is deliberately misleading Canadians. What he is saying is simply not true.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I have to ask the hon. Minister of Finance to withdraw the suggestion that someone was deliberately misleading Canadians. That is not appropriate. I would ask him, now, to withdraw the comment.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my comment. The member opposite is wrong and he knows he is wrong. What he is doing is paying attention to the wrong numbers.

We have the lowest tax rate among G7 countries for small and medium-sized enterprises. We know our economy is growing very well, and it is because of the kinds of things we are doing to help the middle class.

We will continue with our successful program to ensure our economy grows and our system is fair.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister says that I am wrong to suggest that his billion-dollar family business, Morneau Shepell, will be sheltered from these changes.

Could he please list the changes that will apply to Morneau Shepell?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to talk about what we are trying to achieve. We are trying to make sure that we do not have a system that encourages the richest—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. There are some members it seems who feel the time to speak is not when the microphone is on in front of them and the public can hear, but when someone else is speaking. That is not how it works, folks.

If members ask a question, it is important to listen to the answer, whether we like the answer or not. I know we do not always like the answers, we may or may not, but we have to hear them. Also, I need to hear them so I can tell whether someone is out of order.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we have been pretty clear. We know our system right now encourages the wealthiest Canadians to set up a private corporation so they can pay a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. We know the party opposite is perfectly comfortable with wealthier Canadians paying a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians.

We are working toward making sure we look at those advantages and listening to Canadians making sure we are taking measures that will ensure our system is fair.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister delivered a great speech on Liberal foreign policy before the UN today.

However, let us review this government's track record for the past two years: it boycotted the nuclear weapons ban treaty, refuses to commit to a peacekeeping mission, refuses to increase international development assistance, continues selling arms to Saudi Arabia, and I could go on.

Simply put, what happened to Canada's leadership on the world stage? Did I miss some concrete measure that was announced somewhere?

• (1425)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely proud of the role Canada plays on the world stage. It is recognized by many countries.

We step up for peacekeeping, we step up for international aid, and we have spoken out against the persecution happening in Myanmar. We are engaged in those issues. We have spoken out against the situation in North Korea. I do not know exactly what my colleague is talking about, but Canada is present on the world stage, and we are very proud of that.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to have stepped up for peacekeeping, but there is no peacekeeping mission. They claim to have stepped up for international development, but there has been a substantial reduction in our foreign aid budget.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister is paying lip service to his commitment to peace at the UN today. According to media reports, at the conference on peacekeeping that we will host in November, Canada will call on other countries to commit more troops to peacekeeping without making any specific commitment ourselves. The hypocrisy is astounding.

When will Canada commit to a peacekeeping mission?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe very strongly that Canada has to play a role in peacekeeping operations. We are very proud of the history of Canada in peacekeeping, and we know Canadians expect us to do it. That is why we have committed half a billion dollars and 600 troops

Oral Questions

to peacekeeping operations. We are simply taking the necessary, thoughtful, and careful time to consider where we will play that role.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Prime Minister's speech to the United Nations this afternoon with great interest. As usual, he spoke on how the nation-to-nation relationship was the most important to him, yet I said those words, first nations are still under 172 drinking water advisories. This is up from 159 advisories from before he was elected.

How can the Prime Minister keep claiming to the world that this is the most important relationship when in reality, he is letting them down?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we are determined to address the very serious socio-economic gaps that exist and to make sure we deal with issues like access to clean drinking water.

We are very pleased that the Prime Minister spoke with such determination about that today. We have already lifted more than two dozen long-term drinking advisories by doubling the ability to respond to these issues. I will work with the new department of indigenous services and we will end long-term drinking water advisories in the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem has already been identified, but without a clear plan from the government, its five-year objective will not be met.

Let us not forget that this same Prime Minister, who delivered a speech this morning, continues to fight against first nations children, even after one ruling and three orders handed down by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

After two years of fine speeches, it is time to act. Can the government confirm that it will support Bill C-262 on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the four weeks since I have taken on the role as Minister of Indigenous Service, one of the things I have heard so loudly and clearly is the absolute need to address the welfare of indigenous children in our country. I will continue the work that Minister Bennett has done and that I started in my role as Minister of Health. We will make sure—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I must remind the hon. minister that we do not use the personal names of members or colleagues in the House.

The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Minister of Finance owns \$32 million in shares in Morneau Shepell. His ethics filings show they are held in a numbered company. The minister lives in Toronto, Morneau Shepell is headquartered in Toronto, but the numbered company is located in Alberta.

Do any of the Minister of Finance's tax changes stop people from registering their assets in a place they do not live in order to pay less tax than everyone else?

• (1430)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know our tax system encourages wealthy Canadians to incorporate so they pay a lower rate of tax than middle-class Canadians. We have identified that this is important for us to look at to make sure our system is fair. That is exactly what we are doing.

We know that to do this, we need to listen to Canadians and understand the consequences to make sure we get it right. That is exactly what we are doing. Our consultation period is intended to listen to Canadians so we can end up with a tax system that is fair for all Canadians, today and tomorrow.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Morneau Shepell is located in Ontario and the Minister of Finance lives in Ontario. However, his numbered company that holds his \$32 million in Morneau Shepell shares is located in Alberta.

Is there anything in the Minister of Finance's tax plan that would prevent a resident of Ontario from registering a corporation in another province for the purpose of sheltering a family fortune from higher taxes?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we want to make sure that we are very clear on our objectives. We want to make sure we have a system that is fair to all Canadians. We know that right now there are incentives that encourage wealthy Canadians to incorporate to have a lower rate of tax than other Canadians. That is something we need to deal with. To do that, we need to make sure we get it right. We have been consulting with experts for a year. We have been listening to Canadians to make sure we end up with a tax system that is fair.

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to point for some members who insist on heckling when someone else is speaking that they may be putting their own side in danger of losing a question.

The hon. member for Beauce.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): So, Mr. Speaker, no answer.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals think that their tax penalty plan will affect just a small number of business people in Canada, but that is not true.

Why is the Minister of Finance insisting on imposing a tax system on St-Georges Toyota, in Beauce, which will have to pay a 73% tax, when the Prime Minister's family fortune and the finance minister's family business will not be affected?

When will the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance finally start respecting small businesses in Canada?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a clear answer. We currently have a system that encourages the wealthy to incorporate in order to pay a lower tax rate than the middle class. The facts are clear. We also have a situation where small and medium-sized businesses have the lowest tax rate in the G7. That is very important for the future and for investment. At the same time, the system has to be fair.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): What is clear, Mr. Speaker, is that there is one rule for the Minister of Finance and another rule for everyone else, one rule for big business and one rule for small businesses.

The government is overtaxing small businesses, overtaxing mechanics, overtaxing corner store owners. Why? To have more revenue to fix a deficit that the Liberals themselves created.

The solution is very simple: reduce expenditures and provide a fair system for all the country's entrepreneurs.

The Speaker: I must ask the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis not to bang his desk. He knows that it is not acceptable in the House, and I would prefer that he not do it in the future.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have often said, we feel that is very important to make investments. Our decision is to invest in our country. We began with investments in infrastructure. Now, the report is clear: we have a higher rate of growth than 10 years ago. We have created almost 400,000 more jobs than last year. Our program is working, and that is very important to Canadians.

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard loud and clear from the people of Abbotsford, including those in the Liberal riding of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. They are angry as hornets over these terrible tax proposals. Blueberry farmers, entrepreneurs, and small business owners are up in arms. In 12 years as a parliamentarian, I have never seen such outrage, and that outrage grew when they found out that the Prime Minister's and the finance minister's own family fortunes will not be touched by the tax. You tell me, how is that fair?

The Speaker: I hope my hon. friend has not started asking me questions.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians want to have a tax system that is fair. We know they want the rules to apply to everyone. That is why we are putting forth rules that will ensure the richest among us do not have an incentive to lower their tax rate through a private corporation, paying a lower rate of tax than middle-class Canadians, and so we are looking toward putting in place a system that will ensure the system is fair for all Canadians. That is why we are listening to Canadians' points of view from across the country. That is important, but what we are going to do is move forward to make sure our system creates incentives and is fair for all Canadians.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Tyler and Jody from Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, started their own small business 15 years ago at the age of 26. He told me, "At 41 years old, we just now started again putting money away.... Our life savings is our company...." He cannot imagine why the minister would attack his business and his retirement savings with a 73% tax while protecting the family fortune of the Prime Minister and the minister's own personal family business. How is this fair?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are looking toward making sure our system is fair. We are looking toward making sure we do not encourage wealthy Canadians to set up a private corporation so they can pay a lower rate of tax than middle-class Canadians.

We do not want people to be spreading misinformation. The facts are clear. Our low small business tax rate is important. We believe that should be continued. That will allow small businesses across the country to invest in their business to grow the economy. We are going to continue that to make sure that works while also ensuring that this generation, and the next generation, has a tax system that is fair.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is now clear to everyone watching that the Liberals have totally screwed up their small business tax plan. How do we know this? It is because even Liberal MPs are admitting that the Liberals have totally screwed up their small business tax plan.

Why will the finance minister not take up the proposal from New Democrats and from small business owners to expand the review to include all big businesses and to extend the consultations so everyone is heard?

Let us all now watch the finance minister get up and try to defend his botched plan, or maybe he will finally tell Canadians why he is so gosh-darned determined to protect his wealthy and well-connected friends.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring that the wealthy pay their fair share and the middle class have a fair tax rate is something we have been on for the last two years. We have lowered taxes on the middle class and raised them on the one per cent. We have introduced the Canada child benefit and put a billion dollars in the Canada Revenue Agency. Now we are looking toward closing tax advantages for wealthy Canadians.

My question for the member opposite is why has his party not supported any of these measures that are helping the middle class. Why is his party sitting on the sidelines as we are making a real difference for Canadians today and tomorrow?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal could ignore the biggest abuse in our tax system and call it fairness.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, have you ever seen an iceberg? They are as impressive as they are deceptive. In fact, they are exactly like the Liberals' tax reform. If the Minister of Finance were serious, he would keep his promise to abolish the loophole for CEOs, which is costing us \$750 million, and then he would go after tax havens, which are costing us billions of dollars.

Could the minister's red herring be a way for him to appear progressive while still protecting his friends on Bay Street?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect a fair tax system. That is what we promised during the election campaign and that is what we are doing.

In the last two budgets, we invested over \$1 billion in the fight against tax evasion and tax avoidance. Those investments are bearing fruit: \$13 billion in taxes owed last year will be recovered, and 335 cases are under criminal investigation, not to mention 123 search warrants, 37 convictions, \$10 million in fines, \$44 million in penalties—

• (1440)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government promised to run a small \$10-billion deficit, but now it is almost double that and there is no end in sight.

The Compton family has had a family farm on Prince Edward Island for over 100 years. Three generations have invested everything they have in that farm. Today, the Minister of Finance wants to pick their pockets in order to pay off the huge deficit. He is jeopardizing the transfer of the farm to the next generation.

Why is the Minister of Finance coming up with a system where the Compton family would pay 73% in tax, while the Prime Minister's family fortune and the Minister of Finance's family business will not be affected?

[*English*]

How is that fair?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to have a fair system. We want to establish a program that does not encourage the wealthy to incorporate in order to pay a lower tax rate and that also sets a very low tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses. That is very important.

Our investments are very important for the economy, for farmers, and for all Canadians because we are currently experiencing the highest growth rate in a decade. That is very important for SMEs, farmers, and all Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Roy and Ross Newman are farmers in Alberta. They were hoping to pass on their family farm to their sons who would be the fifth generation of Newmans working their land near High River, but they are very concerned about the Liberal tax changes. In fact, tax experts across the country agree. These changes could wipe out the family farm.

Why has the finance minister designed a system that protects his own family fortune and the family fortune of the Prime Minister, but could mean this generation of Newmans is the last on their family farm?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that farmers, other small business people, and Canadians across the country want to make sure their tax system is fair, not only for them, but for their families. They want to make sure it is not a system that encourages people to do tax planning so they will have a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. That is what we are working toward.

In the case of farmers, we know we want to listen to make sure our tax proposals, which are important to make the system fair, do not have unintended consequences. That is why we are listening to farmers across this country. We know how important they are. We are going to listen to them and we are going to get this right.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have not had one farmer or rancher call me in support of these tax changes; that is thousands.

The Hochstein family in my riding are farmers. They have been working the land for four generations. They budget tightly to ensure that their operation can stay afloat, but they are very concerned that the Liberals cannot manage their out-of-control spending and they are coming for their farm to pay for it.

Why would the finance minister design a system where the Hochstein family has to pay 73% tax, whereas the family fortunes of the Prime Minister and the finance minister are untouched? How is that fair?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a good economy helps all Canadians. A fair tax system helps all Canadians. We are working to achieve both. We are making investments in our economy, but we are making sure that we do not have a tax system that encourages the wealthiest to incorporate to have a lower tax rate. That is really important.

What we will see through the changes that we are putting forward is that, over the long term, farms and small businesses will be better off with a fairer tax system and a strong economy. That will help them and that will help the next generation. We are going to make sure that happens.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. The Prime Minister thinks that small business owners are tax cheats, so it is easy for him and the finance minister to demonize them and create a system whereby they are paying 73% tax while companies and family fortunes like those of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are sheltered. It is not fair. We all know that.

When will the Liberals abandon this cowardly and self-serving plan and stand up and do something for small business owners in this country?

● (1445)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Actually, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. We now have a situation where people who are wealthy are encouraged to go to incorporation in order to lower their tax rate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the answer from the hon. Minister of Finance. I need to hear the answer in case he breaks any rules, so I am aware of that. I would ask members to try to restrain themselves and to hear the answer whether they like it or not, because that is what we do here.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, we believe it is important not to spread misinformation. What is really important is to make sure we observe what is going on right now, which is a system that encourages the wealthiest to incorporate to pay a lower rate of tax.

What we have right now also is a system where small and medium-sized businesses pay the lowest rate of tax among G7 countries. That is important. We want to maintain that because we want to allow them to continue to invest in their businesses and our economy. We will go forward to make sure that is the case, and at the same time we will make sure our tax system works for all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government promised to fully compensate dairy farmers. A number of farmers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean have hit a wall because they cannot get the assistance they are owed, given that there is not enough money. Simply put, the government program is underfunded. After the diafiltered milk saga, the Liberals are still chipping away at supply management.

Will the government keep its word, protect supply management, and improve the investment program in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean? Milk and cheese producers need that assistance.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that we will continue to fully support the supply management system. We are the party that fought to put supply management in place, and we are the government that is going to defend supply management.

We put a \$350 million program in place to make sure farmers and processors were at the cutting edge. That is what we are doing for dairy farmers, and that is what we will continue to do for dairy farmers.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 2016 saw more Canadians die from opioid overdoses than any year in history. More than 2,800 Canadians lost their lives in every corner of our nation. Despite this devastating death toll, the government refused to declare a national public health emergency and claimed it was making “progress”. Health Canada just reported that 2017 is on track to see more than 3,000 deaths, breaking records in Vancouver, British Columbia, and nationwide.

Does the new minister call this progress, and if so, can she explain how, when the death toll continues to mount?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do recognize that we are in a national health crisis in Canada, and we are responding in a way that is comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and also evidence-based.

Last week, I announced \$7.5 million that will enhance the development of evidence-based practices that could be used by those dealing with this crisis on the ground. This builds on our investment in budget 2017 and many actions to date.

We will continue to bring forward evidence-based solutions to help turn the tide on this national public health crisis.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has stated that he feels he should not be bound by the same ethical standards he demands of others in the House. He may have forgotten that his own party's changes to the Lobbying Act actually make him a designated public officeholder. This might explain the confusion about the Leader of the Opposition hosting secret fundraisers.

Could the Minister of Democratic Institutions tell the House what she is doing to pull the curtain on these types of fundraisers?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a right to know about fundraising events attended by party leaders and leadership candidates, as well as the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers. Our legislation will make public the information related to who is going to fundraisers, where and when they are happening, and the amount required to attend.

We hope the opposition will support this bill in committee so that no opposition party can ever again have their leader hold secret fundraisers. Together let us all raise the bar—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

* * *

• (1450)

TAXATION

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Marina owns a family farm and ranch in the 100 Mile House area, which just went through the worst B.C. wildfires in its history. She was already on the hook for an increase from the carbon tax and small business payroll taxes. Last week, she got a letter from her accountant telling her about the changes that the

Finance Minister is proposing to investment income. She has been through a really difficult time this summer and feels like she has been kicked when she was already down.

Why is the Finance Minister going to make Marina pay 73% while he continues to shelter the family fortune of the Prime Minister and himself? Why is that fair?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we deal with tax advantages that allow the wealthy to incorporate to get a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. We also have been really clear that we want to retain the low tax rate for small and medium-sized businesses, which is an important incentive for them to invest and grow our economy. That will continue to be important going forward.

We know that business owners, like the one mentioned, and business owners across this country will find themselves in a continuing situation where our strong economy will help them to invest to keep our economy going over the long term.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quintin, a young farmer in my riding wrote:

As I sit here in my combine working tonight I had to stop to email you to voice my concern with these proposals as well. I am hoping to take over this farm from my parents in the next couple of years but know that these proposed changes will only add to an already heavily risky venture and create even less margin for error.

Under these changes, if his parents sell to him they will pay far more tax than if they sell to a stranger.

Why is the Finance Minister ripping apart Quintin's dream while protecting the family income of the Prime Minister and his own family fortune? How in the world is that fair?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers, small business people, and all Canadians have a stake in a fair tax system. We all want to know that we do not create incentives so that wealthy Canadians incorporate to pay a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. For farmers across the country, we know that their business is quite important to them and to Canadians. We are going to listen to them to make sure that we get these changes right. We want to ensure that our system does not create injustices, and allows them to be successful and all Canadians to have opportunities in the future.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Susan Yaka-bowich, one of my constituents, recently started up a small business that will help seniors remain in their communities after they retire. She started this new business after she got laid off from her 30-year career. She did not see that as a loss. She saw it as an opportunity to start a small business, put her skills to use, and improve her community. However, thanks to this new Liberal tax attack on small business, Susan is questioning her decision.

Oral Questions

Why has the Finance Minister designed a system that forces Susan to pay up to 73% tax while the family fortunes of the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister will be sheltered? How fair is that?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are trying to deal with a system that creates incentives for wealthy people to incorporate to pay a lower rate of tax than middle-class Canadians. We want to make sure that misinformation is not spread to people who want to start businesses. That is why we are going to repeat over and over again our continuing goal of keeping taxes low on small and medium-sized enterprises. We have been clear that we are not going to change that. What we are going to do is to make sure that they continue to have the opportunity to invest, because that is so important for them and our economy.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I heard from Harvey who researched the impact of the Liberal tax hikes on his small business of five employees in Barrie—Innisfil. In part, this is what he told me:

This is not a good thing. The Liberals are going to ruin us, all of us, including my employees and their families.

Why has the Finance Minister designed a system by which Harvey will pay 73% tax while the family fortune of the Prime Minister and the family business of the Finance Minister will not be touched? Tell Harvey how that is fair.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Harvey and all Canadians, what we want them to know is that a system that encourages the wealthy to incorporate and have a lower tax rate so they pay less in taxes than the middle class is not a fair system.

We know that for Harvey, the lower tax rate that he can pay as a small business owner is really important. We know that we are not proposing to change that. We know that when Harvey takes money out of his business, we are not proposing to change that.

These are really important things for him to understand. It is very important for our economy, important for Harvey, and important for all Canadians.

* * *

• (1455)

PENSIONS

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals changed the OAS and GIS programs for seniors last January, they promised that “These provisions are not intended to place couples in a worse financial situation.”

However, in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, the spirit of the policy is not being respected. In one case a couple is being forced to file for voluntary separation after 60 years of marriage in order to receive the monthly benefit they need for assisted living care homes. This is clearly wrong.

Will the minister ensure that the policy changes are not hurting seniors and they get the respect and benefits they deserve?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane LeBouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am working hard to ensure that the agency offers quality service to Canadians and that taxpayers get their

benefits as quickly as possible. We know that benefits are important to those who receive them, and we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that all Canadians receive the benefits they are entitled to. The agency continues to work in co-operation with Service Canada to reduce the risk of a potential interruption in GIS payments.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's response is unacceptable. The Liberals promised that seniors who are separated through no fault of their own would not be punished and would not have their retirement benefits clawed back. That is not what is happening.

The minister says that her department updated its policies to include a clarification that ended years of compassion and common sense. What she calls a clarification, I call pushing seniors into poverty.

When will the minister reverse this shameful situation?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane LeBouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government increased investments in awareness and in the community volunteer income tax program so that Canadians, especially low-income Canadians, can get the support they need to file their tax returns. Most benefits, including the guaranteed income supplement, are based on income. Service Canada uses the information provided in individuals' tax returns to calculate how much they are entitled to.

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's energy sector is a world leader. Hundreds of thousands of jobs depend on it. It is the biggest private sector investor in the Canadian economy, but it has had the biggest two-year decline in 70 years.

Energy east will bring western oil to eastern refineries. It will add export markets to secure Canada's energy future. However, it is at risk. The Liberals froze it, killed the panel, struck another with new rules, and it has been three years. It is Liberal chaos and Liberal delays. Workers and their families need answers. Canada needs energy east.

When will the Liberals finally champion this crucial nation-building project?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we very much believe in a competitive and sustainable energy sector and that good projects must go ahead with the full confidence of Canadians.

That is why we have approved pipelines and energy infrastructure projects that create tens of thousands of jobs, while at the same time protecting our oceans, pricing carbon pollution, addressing greenhouse gas emissions, and working in partnership with indigenous peoples.

TransCanada's request is a business decision. The proponent develops its project application in a business environment where factors like the price of oil do change. We are committed to ensuring that economic prosperity and environmental protection go hand in hand.

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that you and your 30 colleagues from Atlantic Canada know that our country imports over a million barrels of oil a day. Why? It is because there is no pipeline to the east coast.

However, there is a solution to this problem, as my colleague just mentioned. I will ask the parliamentary secretary to clarify the fact that the rules have not changed, but that the Liberals, not the price of oil, changed the rules on this application.

When is the Prime Minister or the Minister of Environment or Minister of Natural Resources going to come to their senses and preserve the Alberta advantage that the Minister of Finance's trust fund now enjoys by being registered—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government stands firmly behind the energy sector as a source of good middle-class jobs and we recognize the importance of competitiveness to this industry. The request by TransCanada for a 30-day pause in the assessment of the energy east project is ultimately a business decision. Canadians know that building a strong economy and protecting the environment are not competing interests; they are shared priorities. We are restoring public trust in our regulatory processes and environment assessments, recognizing that this confidence is key to ensuring that good projects go ahead with the confidence of Canadians.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals seem ready to go to any lengths to prevent energy east from moving forward. We have just learned that the assessment process has had to be suspended for 30 days. This government is throwing open the doors to petroleum importers like Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, but is constantly creating obstacles for Canadian companies that would like to create jobs in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

Why does the Prime Minister persist in making decisions that are costing good jobs all across the country and that prevent the wealth of the west from flowing to the east?

[*English*]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a couple of times, our government stands strongly behind the energy sector in moving resources to market in a sustainable way. Under this government, we have approved a number of pipeline and infrastructure projects, but we have done so in a manner that will be environmentally sustainable. This government has achieved far more in two years than the previous government achieved in 12.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, mental health is an issue that affects all Canadians. People like Noah Irvine, a mental health advocate who tragically lost both of his parents to mental health illness, are fighting to improve access to services. In my own riding of Oakville I know that more can be done.

Can the Minister of Health update the House on what the government is doing to improve mental health services and outcomes for Canadians?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the wonderful work that Noah Irvine has done in this area, and I was honoured to meet with him today.

All members of the House recognize the devastating impact that suicide has on their families, their friends, and their community. Last November, our government launched a federal framework on suicide prevention and announced investments to link distress lines across the country into one national suicide prevention line, and through budget 2017, we are also investing \$5 billion to increase access to mental health services.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MARIJUANA

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, when the Conservatives' Quebec caucus met in Lac-Saint-Jean, a number of the area's residents repeated what Canadians have been telling us all summer, namely that they are opposed to the legalization of marijuana as the Prime Minister is proposing. They want to know why the Liberals are ignoring the concerns of the police, the advice of health professionals, and the provincial governments, who are not ready for this.

Can the Prime Minister explain to us why legalizing marijuana is his government's priority?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that has been debated extensively over the course of the last two years. The government benefited from a very professional panel review, headed by former minister Anne McLellan. Our legislation before the House largely reflects the recommendations of her task force. The objective is clear: to better keep marijuana out of the hands of our children and to better keep money, billions of dollars, out of the hands of organized crime. The sooner we do that, the better.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a response to a petition stated that the *Kathryn Spirit* is stable and that there is no risk of pollution or threat to the marine environment.

However, when I look at the call for tenders for the dismantling and the response to my written question, I see that a group of experts said there are at least 30 tonnes of residual waste, including asbestos, PCBs, and lead, and probably also mercury, cadmium, and radioactive material.

Would the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard be happy having 30 tonnes of that kind of waste in his backyard? Does he think \$20 million will be enough to dismantle the *Kathryn Spirit*?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we, unlike the previous government, promised, we made the decision to dismantle the *Kathryn Spirit*. We provided funding to build the cofferdam, which was done some time ago, and we are now in the process of finding a contractor to dismantle this vessel. Naturally, we will keep the environmental impact in mind during the dismantling process. This government keeps its promises.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week, athletes from 17 countries will gather in Toronto to compete in the Invictus Games, an international sporting competition for ill and injured veterans, and armed forces members. Canadian heroes will be competing in events such as wheelchair basketball and swimming, which will be occurring in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park at the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs speak to the importance of these games, and how all Canadians can get involved to show their support for Team Canada, and the brave men and women from around the world who will be competing in their uniforms?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park for championing the Invictus Games in Toronto.

These games have already saved lives. They give many ill and injured servicemen and servicewomen purpose, comradeship that many of them miss, and the joy of elation of sport, not only for the athletes themselves but for the veterans who watch them. For some, it is the spark that gets them moving to get the professional help they need.

Over the next week, I invite all Canadians from across this country to come together and cheer on these outstanding athletes.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer my office received over 1,000 emails and letters about the finance minister's statement calling them tax cheats and tax evaders. I stand with these entrepreneurs, risk-takers, and hard-working Canadians. The member for Edmonton Centre has apologized for the minister's attack on hard-working entrepreneurs for the tone and language he used in rolling out these proposals.

Will the finance minister do the same?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to fight to make sure our tax system is fair. We will continue to talk about tax advantages that encourage the wealthiest to incorporate, so they have a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. We think that is important work.

We know we need to listen to Canadians to make sure we get these measures right. We also know that over the long term they will ensure that our system works, so people can make investments, and future generations can believe they have an opportunity just like we do.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the abuse of power continues. Yesterday, the Spanish government conducted a police raid and arrested finance minister Josep Maria Jové, treasury secretary Lluís Salvado, and 12 other Catalan senior government officials.

When elected officials are thrown in prison, democracy is compromised. It is shameful for the government to invoke non-interference so that it does not have to take action.

Will Canada disassociate itself from the Spanish government and speak out against these scandalous arrests?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada enjoys friendly relations with Spain. The issue of Catalonia falls squarely under Spanish domestic affairs. We hope that the country's internal debates come to a harmonious and respectful end in accordance with its constitutional framework.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Innovation thinking of joining the NDP, by any chance?

When a Liberal government minister sides with the future NDP leader, or I guess I should say an NDP leadership candidate, against Quebec and when he chooses religious dictates over Quebec, that is a valid question.

How can the minister justify his contempt for Quebec democracy by announcing that he will not support a bill that falls under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction before he has even read it?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to live in a country that promotes diversity and inclusion.

As I said yesterday, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is for everyone. I will continue to defend the freedom and equality of all Canadians. That is a fundamental principle for me.

* * *

• (1510)

QUEBEC'S JURISDICTIONS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent for me to move the following motion:

That this House respect democracy and affirm Quebec's right to debate and legislate on any matter within its jurisdiction.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The 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)

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a good week back. I am looking forward to hearing the government House leader's reply in terms of what we are going to be doing for the rest of this week and next week. I did notice that this week there was no supply day given. I know it has probably been a bit of a difficult week for the government, and it probably does not want to give us more time to be asking questions about things like the tax changes it is making.

I am wondering if next week there will be a supply day, so that the opposition can do its job, and have at least a full day to call the government to account on a number of issues, not the least of which are these tax changes.

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue this

Government Orders

morning's debate on Bill C-47 regarding the Arms Trade Treaty. Tomorrow we will begin debate at second reading of Bill C-58, an act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

[English]

We will continue with consideration of Bill C-58 on Monday and Tuesday next week.

On Wednesday, we will commence second reading debate of Bill C-55, the bill to enhance the protection of Canada's marine and coastal areas.

Next Thursday, we will resume debate of the bill before us today, Bill C-47.

In response to the opposition House leader's question, my hon. colleague knows very well there are seven opposition days in the fall, and we will have more information for her in regard to scheduling. We figured, with all of us coming back to the House, it would be kind of us to let the opposition settle in, and get the government's business ahead, but I look forward to continuing to work together.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXPORT AND IMPORT PERMITS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, An Act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code (amendments permitting the accession to the Arms Trade Treaty and other amendments), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: There are three minutes of questions and comments remaining following the speech of the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have been baffled by the responses from the other parties. From the Liberals, we hear that Bill C-47 is fine in meeting the challenges of the arms control treaty and its ratification. From the Conservatives, we hear that it goes too far, and will apply to domestic gun sales. It is certainly the case that on reading the bill, it does not have any domestic application to selling guns within Canada.

I know the member mentioned this in his speech. We have a huge loophole here, one pointed out by Project Ploughshares, Oxfam, and other groups that have been working hard to get the arms control treaty brought in. The treaty allows weapons to be sold in the United States, which is not planning to become a party to this treaty, and there will be no record keeping for that.

Would my hon. colleague agree that we need amendments at committee, so the bill can meet the challenge of the arms control treaty?

Government Orders

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, this is one of the big concerns of the NDP, if not the biggest. As she mentioned, there are groups out there who have said this is a loophole we could drive a tank through. We do not want to see Canada stepping back from its obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty by exempting exports to the United States from the Export and Import Permits Act.

We want to see those transactions covered by this bill as well. Frankly, because the United States is not a signatory to this treaty, or at least has not ratified it, it could then pass on equipment it makes, with Canadian products and components, to countries we may not approve and may not be covered under the treaty. Therefore, we would like this loophole closed securely in an amendment at committee.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague believe that this issue and our economic relationship with our trading partner the United States are of such importance that they call for pragmatism, openness, and collaboration in committee? Surely they deserve that.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important situation. Half of our military exports go to the United States. This is a huge part of our exports. The United States is obviously a big trading partner. This would not endanger that at all. It would just be the tracking mechanisms, so that Canada could live up to its obligations under the treaty.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Peace, on which we are asked to commit to peace above all differences and to contribute to building a culture of peace here in our community, our country, and around the world.

Human rights are not optional. If the government wants to show Canada that it is a leader in human rights, then it needs to ensure that it, and we, are walking the talk.

I was very moved at a ceremony in my community in Nanaimo on August 6, which is the anniversary of the tragic and terrible bombing of Hiroshima, where members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom were talking about the United Nations treaty to ban nuclear weapons. At this ceremony last year they shared my hope that the Prime Minister was going to walk his talk and sign the treaty, given his campaign commitments about peace, security, and restoring Canada's good reputation on the world stage.

However, this year peace activists—and I think particularly of my mentor, Dyane Brown—were condemning the Prime Minister because he had directed Canada to vote against negotiations to end the nuclear weapons trade. Therefore, Canada voted against those negotiations and is not a signatory to that treaty. It was shameful. The United Nations Secretary-General called for nuclear negotiations, and 68 countries voted in favour. This was a bit more than a year ago, and Canada was on the outside of that international consensus.

The vote was called “the most significant contribution to nuclear disarmament in two decades” by one of the United Nations member countries. It is a shameful position for our country to be in. With the Liberal government's vote, Canada has effectively removed itself from nuclear disarmament democracy and diplomacy. We do not understand how Canada can be back, in the government's words, “on the international stage” when the Prime Minister is turning his back on the most important international negotiations in years. The threat of nuclear war is so present on the international stage right now that it is even more important that the international community work together at this time.

New Democratic members of Parliament and the representative for the Green Party stood on the steps of Parliament yesterday with activists in the area. We ourselves signed that treaty in a sign of solidarity, even though our Prime Minister and the Government of Canada will not.

There is much more United Nations consensus in which our country can join. A 2009 resolution of the Security Council stressed the particular impact of armed conflict on women, children, refugees, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and older persons. As the New Democrat spokesperson on the status of women, I am going to bring a gender lens in particular to this debate.

The UN and international aid agencies say women are among the most heavily impacted victims of war. Tens of thousands suffer sexual violence, rape, and lack of access to life-saving health care. Amnesty International says women and girls are uniquely and disproportionately affected by armed conflict. Women bear the brunt of war and are the vast majority of casualties resulting from war. Rape and sexual violence target women and girls and are routinely used not only to terrorize women but as a strategic tool of war and an instrument of genocide. Systematic rape is often used as a weapon of war in ethnic cleansing and, in addition to rape, girls and women are often subject to forced prostitution and trafficking during times of war, sometimes with the complicity of governments and military authorities.

Is it not time that we look more closely at the regimes to which Canada exports weapons? In all countries everywhere in the world, sexual violation of women erodes the very fabric of a community in the way that few weapons can. This is the moral challenge to our country and government. About 603,000,000 women live in countries where domestic violence is not considered a crime. Are we exporting weapons there?

In many countries there is repression, silencing of abuse, and mistreatment and imprisonment of women, human rights defenders, and activists. Are we exporting weapons there? In some countries, women are considered perpetual legal minors, permanently under the guardianship of a male relative. Are we exporting there?

• (1520)

In some countries, it is actually legal for a man to rape his wife. Are we exporting arms to those countries?

Government Orders

We hear again and again that Canadians want to have more scrutiny over the destination of Canadian weapons, and they want to know that we are not exacerbating those human rights abuses in countries abroad.

At last year's New Democrat convention, Stephen Lewis powerfully said:

We're not supposed to be sending armaments to countries that have a 'persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens.' Saudi Arabia is the embodiment of the meaning of the word 'violations.' And the government of Canada refuses to release its so-called assessment of the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. So much for the newly minted policy of transparency.

He then called out the Prime Minister, who “unselfconsciously calls himself a feminist” but is selling weapons to a regime “steeped in misogyny.”

Is it not time that we looked more closely at the regimes to which we export weapons? Many Canadians would be shocked to know that Canadian weapons exports have nearly doubled over the last 10 years.

While Canada used to export primarily to NATO countries, under the Conservative government these shifted to regimes with particularly troubling human rights records. Canada is now the second-largest arms dealer in the Middle East after the U.S. Saudi Arabia is now the world's second-largest buyer of Canadian-made military equipment.

There are increasing allegations that Canadian weapons are being used to commit human rights violations in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Sudan.

Last year, the NDP wanted to create a committee in this House that would have provided parliamentary oversight of arms exports. We would have had multi-party co-operation investigating current and future arms exports. However, the Liberal government voted against it.

All last year we called for Canada to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. Finally, with this legislation, Canada is, but Bill C-47 does not strengthen export controls, and we have no idea whether future arms deals with human rights-abusing countries would be prohibited. The Arms Trade Treaty was meant to prevent these kinds of deals, but the government's legislation seems to go against the spirit and the letter of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Nor does it consider violence against women and children. The Arms Trade Treaty requires the exporting country to take into account the risk of arms or munitions “being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children.” The Arms Trade Treaty is the first international convention to recognize and address the link between conventional arms transfers and gender-based violence. That is a good thing. Such criteria should be incorporated into Canada's export controls, but this bill fails to address that need.

We have a government that says it is deeply committed to equal rights for women, and committed to transparency, do let us move forward. Let us do the right thing collectively. Let us amend this bill to make it fair, transparent, full of human rights for women, and consistent with the Arms Trade Treaty. Let us make Canada proud again on the world stage.

● (1525)

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member. She made reference Saudi Arabia. We know that the NDP are hard to pin down in terms of what its actual position is.

Who do we believe? Do we believe some of the NDP members of Parliament who are sitting in this chamber right now? Do we believe someone like the leader of the New Democratic Party, who during the election campaign made a commitment to anyone who was in earshot at a factory in London when he was talking about how the NDP would honour the agreement with Saudi Arabia.

My question for the member across the way is this: was the leader of the New Democratic Party wrong to have made that particular commitment to the workers and others, when he made the statement that the NDP would honour the agreement with Saudi Arabia? Was the leader of the New Democratic Party wrong at that time? Are some of the members maybe a little misplaced in their thinking on the issue of that contract with Saudi Arabia?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I think we have probably answered that question in this House more times than I can count.

The signing of the contract at the time and the uses of the armoured vehicles were one question. The contract was established under the terms of the old Conservative government. By the time the Liberal government, in its new power, was asked to sign, in its own name, the export agreement to honour those vehicles being moved, it was very clear that there were guns mounted to the front of those armoured vehicles. At that point, the product being exported was a very different product.

This government was fully aware of that. It is this government's signature that is on this export agreement. This is the one that is being called to account by human rights activists in this country and around the world.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the Arms Trade Treaty is one that Canada should have stepped up to under the previous government. Unfortunately, we have seen that the way the legislation has been drafted leaves large loopholes that need fixing.

In answer to the question from the parliamentary secretary, it is hard to square the comments of her outgoing leader with an objection to selling tanks to Saudi Arabia, but we move forward and learn from those experiences.

Would the hon. member agree with the statement that came through from Amnesty International, Project Ploughshares, and Oxfam Canada that the loopholes allowing weapons to be sold through the U.S. with no record-keeping create a loophole so large we can drive a tank through it?

Government Orders

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, after two years of promises, we finally have a government that is going to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. That is a good thing. I am not going to vote against that. I very much want to move it to committee. As the member cites, we are absolutely in solidarity with the changes that our activist friends Project Ploughshares want to see, so I will be voting to send this to committee.

In addition to the loophole around violence against women I cited in my speech, one of the loopholes we note is that the Arms Trade Treaty asks us to look at what our exports would be to the United States. Right now, this version of the bill does not allow for any licensing or scrutiny of whether these arms would be used in a way that reveals or exacerbates human rights problems. That is one of the three big loopholes we will be trying to close at committee. We hope that the government will listen to reason this time around.

• (1530)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very proud today to stand in the House to speak to Bill C-47, which would make the legislative changes necessary so Canada could finally accede to the international Arms Trade Treaty. This issue has concerned me for many years.

Six years ago, I led a training program for women running for parliament in the Democratic Republic of Congo. So many of the women, when speaking of their motivation to run for office, spoke of having been sexually violated at gunpoint and wanting to build a country where their sons and daughters did not have to live in fear of violence. When I asked the women in that room how many of them had been raped, over 80% of them put up their hand. I will never forget what one of the women said to me. She said, “Congo doesn't manufacture weapons. Every gun that was used against us was brought here by somebody. If you can stop the guns, you can stop the rape.”

Two years later, the international community came together in 2013 to sign the Arms Trade Treaty, which regulates the illicit trade in small arms and conventional weapons, and it was agreed upon. It came into force in 2014.

The Arms Trade Treaty includes specific provisions on the use of conventional weapons to commit serious acts of violence against women and girls, including rape. I assumed that Canada would be one of the first countries to lead the world in signing this incredibly important treaty, but I was wrong. Now, 130 countries have signed the Arms Trade Treaty and I am very proud that once this legislation passes, Canada will finally be among them.

According to Oxfam, 2,000 people a day are killed by small arms around the world. In fact, the amount of money the continent of Africa lost as a result of armed conflict between 1990 and 2006 was almost the exact same as the amount of official development assistance it received. Not only does regulating the illicit trade in weapons stop arms from getting into the hands of dictators, of criminals, of terrorists, of mercenaries, and of non-state militia groups that commit horrific human rights abuses, but it will also ensure that the poorest and most fragile states will be able to commit that money to the sustainable development goals.

Signing the Arms Trade Treaty is not just good for people in other countries, it also will benefit Canada significantly.

The first benefit that I would like to highlight are the international relations benefits to Canada of acceding to the Arms Trade Treaty. It will put us back in line with our allies. At this point, Canada is the only NATO or G7 country not to have signed or ratified the treaty. Canada has long been at the forefront of promoting export controls as a way of reducing the types of risks that are addressed in the Arms Trade Treaty. Indeed, we are founding members of the four export control regimes, multilateral initiatives created in response to concern about the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; missiles and related dual use goods and technologies; or, in the case of the Wassenaar arrangement, in order to regulate the export of conventional weapons. Remaining outside the ATT is not in Canada's international interest.

[*Translation*]

We have long recognized that Canada benefits from a strong, rules-based international system. In that regard, the Arms Trade Treaty sets clear rules for international trade in conventional arms, rules that take into account important issues for Canada, such as preventing violations and abuses of human rights or international humanitarian law. It is in Canada's interest that as many states as possible join and implement the ATT, to ensure that all states adopt the type of strong export controls that we already have in place.

Accession to the ATT will allow Canada to be more effective and to work multilaterally in its quest for a more transparent and accountable arms trade.

• (1535)

[*English*]

Accession to the Arms Trade Treaty also offers Canada important national and international security benefits. Canada's security and that of its allies is put at risk when terrorists have easy access to weapons. The ATT requires that all state parties assess the risk that exports could contribute to terrorism and not export these goods if that risk is overriding.

The ATT requires the same considerations for transnational crime, which benefits from selling weapons to the highest bidder regardless of how they intend to use such weapons. The ATT also requires that its state parties prevent diversion of their exports and of their own stockpiles of weapons.

[*Translation*]

More broadly, the illicit proliferation of conventional weapons promotes and sustains conflict, conflict that leads to regional and even global instability; conflict that forces people from their homes; conflict that generates poverty and inequality and prevents sustainable development.

Government Orders

Canada benefits from a stable, prosperous world. The conflict created when weapons flow easily into fragile states creates instability for us and for all our international partners. Accession to the ATT will allow Canada to work with the international community to stem such weapon flows.

We recently contributed one million dollars to the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation with the goal of assisting states that want to accede to the ATT or improve their implementation of the treaty. Many states have not implemented the strong set of checks and balances that are necessary.

Canadian and international security can only benefit from more states that carefully consider the potential impacts and diversion risks of conventional arms exports before authorizing such sales.

[*English*]

There is considerable domestic benefit to Canadian accession and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. Canadian accession to the ATT will promote responsible and transparent arms trade globally. As I have already noted, Canada has a strong and rigorous export control system, but that does not mean it cannot be further improved.

[*Translation*]

The bill before the House will allow Canada to fully implement the ATT. By doing so, we will be strengthening our current system of export control. Although the government wishes to see Canada accede to the treaty as soon as possible, we will accede as a responsible member, by being able to comply with all the obligations of the treaty.

The bill before the House is intended to ensure that Canada explicitly complies with the obligation to assess exports of conventional arms according to the criteria set out in the Arms Trade Treaty. These include the need to assess the effect on international peace and security, the risk of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, the risk of facilitating terrorism or transnational organized crime, and the risk of gender-based violence or violence against women and children. Our government intends to ensure that these considerations will be enshrined as required obligations for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, and that the criteria set out in the ATT will be explicitly listed as factors that must be considered in each export licence assessment.

[*English*]

The bill before us would also ensure that Canada can comply with ATT obligations on brokering. It proposes to impose the same standards we expect from Canadian individuals and companies that export conventional weapons to those who seek, legitimately, to broker such weapons. Brokering controls will strengthen Canada's export control system by tracking the movement of controlled items outside of Canada and supporting global co-operation in the international trade of conventional arms.

[*Translation*]

Our government proposes to apply these provisions not only to conventional arms, as the ATT requires, but also to items of strategic importance. We propose to ensure that brokering operations are assessed according to the same factors used to obtain export licences.

● (1540)

This will ensure that arms transfers organized by Canada comply with Canadian legislation and policies.

[*English*]

I began by talking about the courageous women I met in the Congo and around the world. They are fighting for a world where their daughters and sons can live free from fear and violence. Through Bill C-47, I can stand in this place and let the women I met in the Congo, Liberia, Kosovo, Bosnia, and in so many other places know that our country will do its part.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I honour the member's work with the United Nations and around the world. She has a particular voice that is brought to this issue. I thank her for the storytelling she included in her speech.

The question I have is about the commitment of Bill C-47 to examining the human rights violations of women and children in particular. I am very interested in her perspective on this, because I know this is an important part of her background.

It is my understanding that the Arms Trade Treaty requires the exporting country to take into account the risk of arms or munitions being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. Although this is in the Arms Trade Treaty, it is not translated into Bill C-47.

Could the member speak to that? If she agrees that it is a missing piece, will she argue for amendments in committee to close that loophole?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work the member also does for women and girls in Canada and around the world.

Specifically on this question, I think where the confusion might lie is that this is a factor that will be done through regulations. I can reassure my colleague that the regulations will include every single one of the article 7 obligations. That means the legislation will include the very provisions in the Arms Trade Treaty which talk about protection of women and girls from violence.

An important thing to note is that by doing this through regulation, we are making it more flexible. In fact, this is the very kind of thing that would allow us, in the future, to expand and include other forms of gender-based violence in these regulations rather than have to go through a legislative framework.

If anything, this actually empowers, even more, the ability for Canada not only to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty and to all the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, but also to be a leader in the world and show an example in the world.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean proudly represents a number of people who work with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Government Orders

She might find it strange that article 5 of this treaty actually prevents DND from potentially doing government-to-government transfers of assistance of a military nature, like we are doing with the peshmerga and our fight against ISIS. Canada's safe and effective regulatory regime for export of military equipment and such has never required such a drastic step as is in article 5 of this treaty.

Since the member also proudly represents a number of civil servants, I wonder if she would comment on why our current system is broken, the one we have had since the 1940s that leads the world, the one that has the Trade Controls Bureau, and the fact that the Export and Import Permits Act permits the government to have an area of control list banning countries entirely from getting anything from Canada?

A number of measures have effectively been regulated on a Canadian basis since the Second World War. We did not need the United Nations to tell us how to do this. In fact, our regime is superior to a number of the elements in here.

As an Ottawa and area member, could the member tell us what parts of the current regime, which Canada has been using successfully, have been failing and are in need of Bill C-47?

• (1545)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, I am proud that I represent the riding that will have the large DND campus. I am also proud that a number of public servants and a number of employees of the Department of National Defence are my constituents. That is exactly why this is extremely important. This is going to make Canada once again a leader in the world.

With regard to article 5, I would remind my hon. colleague that our current arms controls meet or exceed all 28 articles in the Arms Trade Treaty, except for articles 10 and 7, and those are to do with the brokering controls and formalizing the accountability process and the transparency of the criteria for export permits. All of our controls already exist with regard to article 5.

In the same breath the hon. member talked about the fact that the current system is working. I would venture first of all to say that a lot of the things in the current system, like the Wassenaar Arrangement, are not all-encompassing of the 130 countries but also are not legally binding. The Arms Trade Treaty is legally binding, and that is extremely important. It would allow Canada not just to be able to reinforce what we are doing, but also including the \$1 million that we have put to the international community will help other countries to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty and to take that leadership in the world that our public servants and members of DND and our armed forces are proud of.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke eloquently about her international experience and her conversations with women and the use of arms against women in other countries.

I am wondering if they had heard that our country had not signed the UN Arms Trade Treaty and what she thinks it would mean for our international relations to find out that we are now finally going to sign on to this treaty.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: It is close to my heart, Madam Speaker. When I was working with women in countries around the world,

they would ask me what is happening to Canada and where Canada is. In many cases, they told me not only was Canada absent but Canada was actually blocking progress on some of the things they needed in order to promote and empower women around the world and empower the world's poorest. I heard this over and over again.

When I was working with the UN in New York, I heard many times from counterparts that Canada was being asked not to show up for international negotiations because we were seen as obstructionists. That was very embarrassing to me. I sat in a room with women who told me they were running for parliament in their countries, trying to do their part. They asked me why I was not running for office so I could do my part and change things in Canada. That was primarily what really motivated me to run for this place, and I am so proud today. This is one of my proudest days, because I am able to rise in this place and tell those women that Canada is going to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I also want to thank my friend for bringing up the reality of what happens to women in conflict zones around the world and the importance of stopping the flow of weapons. A lot of Canadians would be shocked by the information she has brought forward.

I am certainly aware of the fact that, over the last number of years, Canada has become much more part of the global arms trade than we have ever been in the past. We need to stem the flow of armaments to many countries around the world. We need to step up and sign the nuclear disarmament treaty. There are many things that Canada needs to do to reclaim its place in the world at the time when Lester B. Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize, one of the things for which Canadians feel very proud.

Would my hon. colleague agree that when the bill gets to committee, we need to fix the loophole that allows armaments to be sent into the United States with no records being kept? The United States is a non-party state. They could go to many countries around the world that would not meet Canadian standards.

• (1550)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, I am proud that, as of today, I am on the foreign affairs committee. Members on this committee work well together in being able to find solutions to problems as a country, and not by looking at problems through a partisan lens. I am looking forward to seeing this bill before committee, hearing from witnesses, and looking at what could be improved.

Many of the things within the Arms Trade Treaty are already being done by Canada. We need to make sure there is more transparency. It requires reporting to the House. It requires that we have control over brokering. There are a lot of things that we need to do in order to be able to accede to the treaty. I am pleased that I will have the opportunity to participate in that discussion in committee.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Yellowhead.

Government Orders

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-47, a bill that would create the legislative provisions to permit Canada to sign on to the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty. I want to begin by expressing that I have always been supportive of legislative measures and other efforts to establish international standards for arms transfers that seek to prevent illicit transfers of weapons around the world. I have no opposition to that aspect of the treaty; it is important that we halt the flow of arms to dangerous regimes and terrorist cells.

However, I will focus my comments today on an area of concern that I feel, under the government, is not being duly considered as a side effect of signing on to that Arms Trade Treaty. That is how this legislation, in signing the Arms Trade Treaty, would impact law-abiding gun owners such as hunters, firearms, and sports shooters like me.

I believe that any treaty such as this must contain explicit exemptions for civilian firearms or, at the very least, eliminate vague language and language that could suggest that firearms owned by civilians for recreational use could become subject to measures in the treaty. The treaty should recognize and acknowledge the legitimacy of lawful ownership of firearms by responsible citizens for their personal and recreational use.

As it is currently written, the treaty does not meet these conditions, and concerns from Canadian firearms owners have fallen on deaf ears from the government. A good example of that is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs saying the concerns of hunters and sports shooters are “bogus”. He is telling me that my concerns are bogus and obviously that points out how out of touch he is. I have to shake my head about a comment like that. Obviously he is not representing all the people in his riding, because every riding in this country has people who like to sport shoot.

I support some of the things that the UN does, but I also have some grave concerns. The international news in the last couple of days reports comments from British Prime Minister May, who basically is telling the UN to reform, clean up its act, or funds will be cut to it. There are other things that raise concerns for me and a lot of other Canadians.

While in government, the Conservative Party took time to analyze this treaty and its impacts on the firearms community in Canada. The government is seemingly looking at this issue as a one and done type of deal. Sign on, pass the legislation the UN deems must be passed, and call it a day. It is not quite that simple, and concerns have been raised about the implications of this treaty, as I alluded.

I was honoured to serve alongside the Hon. John Baird, former minister of foreign affairs, and it was during his tenure that this treaty was at the forefront of public debate. Minister Baird took his time in making a decision, as he knew how complicated this matter was. He noted that the vagueness of the language in the treaty had the potential to create situations wherein backdoor firearms registries could be created. He asked that civilian firearms be removed from the scope of the treaty and that it be made explicit. When this request was not met, the decision was made to not move forward with signing on to the treaty. That is what should be happening today.

I understand that, when the Liberals made this promise, they were in opposition and it made for a nice 2015 campaign promise. I know they did not understand the complexities that come with the implementation of these treaties, and they still do not. However, I am asking the government now to consider all the impacts and all the concerns that have been presented. They are not bogus. The government is typically hellbent on consulting. For example, at this very moment, there are currently 87 open consultations, and this is great, if it were really true. It is great that the government will hear concerns on a number of issues.

• (1555)

My question is this. Why will the government not hear from firearms owners? Why will it not at least give firearms owners an opportunity to voice their concerns with this treaty?

It is ironic that one of the Liberals' open consultations right now is on their proposed tax reforms for small businesses, farmers, and physicians. They opened this consultation process in the middle of summer when many Canadians were on vacation and when all farmers were busy working the fields. It is actions like this that make me wonder if the government really wants to hear input or whether it is simply consulting for the sake of saying it consulted.

If the Liberals did open a consultation process on the Arms Trade Treaty, they would hear that firearms owners have a number of very specific concerns. Of particular concern is article 5 of the treaty, which contains several sections, but particularly sections 2 and 4 are quite concerning. Section 2 states:

2. Each State Party shall establish and maintain a national control system, including a national control list, in order to implement the provisions of this Treaty.

Section 4 follows up on section 2 by stating that:

4. Each State Party, pursuant to its national laws, shall provide its national control list to the Secretariat, which shall make it available to other States Parties. States Parties are encouraged to make their control lists publicly available.

Those in the firearms community, including me, are concerned that the vague phrasing of these sections has the potential to create a national and/or international registry, which could include civilian firearms and would then be made public. It is a real fear that this could come out of the bill. When expressed, these concerns have fallen on deaf ears with no response from the government. Again, it really does not want to consult or hear.

Government Orders

I can speak first-hand to the level of concern that Canadians have with Bill C-47. I recently sponsored an e-petition. In fact, I have it beside me on my desk, and I will table it in the House tomorrow. The petition was initiated in Prince George, British Columbia. This petition calls on the government to not sign onto the UN Arms Trade Treaty and to not pass Bill C-47 into law as is. If this did not happen, the petitioners call on the government to amend Bill C-47 to not include any of the sections and subsections that would require importers, stores, and individuals to keep any records of any imported or exported firearms, or any article that falls into the brokering control list. Furthermore, the petitioners call on the government to amend the bill to eliminate the penalty for not keeping adequate records, which the legislation states carries a fine not exceeding \$250,000, or imprisonment not exceeding 12 months, or both.

This petition has 4,584 signatures on it from ridings right across the country, from ridings of some of my colleagues sitting beside me, and more than likely from ridings of colleagues across the way. They include signatories from every province and territory across the country. That is how widespread this is. The support is also very evenly distributed across the country and does not seem to have any sort of regional bias.

It is a shame that the government must learn about this from me. It would know this information itself if it had done the right thing in the first place and given firearms owners an actual opportunity, a real consultation, to voice their concerns. Unfortunately, this is standard practice. The Liberals give lip service and do not really carry out the consultation in a real, truthful manner. This seems to be the standard practice for the government when it comes to relating to firearms owners in Canada, no matter what the issue.

Given that the government refuses to listen to firearms owners and concerned stakeholders in the firearms community, I would like to take a few moments to read some of the comments from these groups. However, as I must conclude, I will not get a chance to read some of these comments from the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, the president of the National Firearms Association, and others.

With that, I look forward to taking questions from my colleagues across the way. Lastly, I would urge the government again to do the right thing and do the consultations.

• (1600)

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague indicated toward the beginning of his speech, and I do not want to directly quote him and misquote him as he misquoted me, that he seemed to agree with the intent of the bill, which would allow Canada to accede to the Arms Trade Treaty and ensure that international trade in conventional arms would not contribute to international conflict and instability that we know negatively impact women and children more than a lot of other vulnerable groups. The treaty is about import, export, and international brokering environments. My colleague seemed to agree with the notion that it was a good idea and that he could support it.

Let me disabuse him of his misunderstanding of what this bill is not about. It is not about domestic gun controls. Nothing in Bill C-47

affects domestic controls on the lawful and legitimate use of firearms. Second, it would not create a registry of conventional arms. Record keeping for the import and export of arms in Canada has existed since the 1940s. It existed under the Conservative government. Bill C-47 would leave in place the same record keeping of conventional arms that was used under the former Conservative government.

If he agrees with what the bill would do and now has an understanding of what the bill would not do, will he now agree to support it?

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, members like my colleague across the way want to cherry-pick my comments. If he had listened to everything I said, and it is obvious that he did not, what I said about dealing arms from bad regimes country to country was one thing. I agree with that, but I talked about firearms that came here affecting civilian firearms owners like myself and thousands of others across the country. He just does not want to buy into that.

Another fact that proves he is wrong is that the bill states that the information has to be retained for six years.

Again, one cannot pick and choose what is in the legislation. It should be amended so it is better. I will look at it, and maybe I will agree, maybe I will not, but the government should at least change the bad parts that law-abiding firearms owners, hunters, shooters, and farmers keep pointing out. The government should make the bill better now that it has the opportunity to do it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, knowing the good common sense of my colleague, I want to ask him if he does not think it despicable that his party voted against a motion that seemed to make a lot of sense and that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Interpretation does not seem to be working.

It seems to be working now. The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Madam Speaker, knowing the good common sense of my colleague, I want to ask him why his party did not support our bill that would have given some parliamentary oversight of who we were sending arms to. Knowing the member has good common sense, why would his party not support such an idea?

• (1605)

Mr. Larry Miller: First, Madam Speaker, I am not sure what legislation my hon. friend is referring to. My party will support anything that is practical and will actually do something as far as the safety of citizens, and that kind of thing. Without having a chance to peruse the bill he talked about, I have to assume that it was not worth the paper it was written on or we would have supported it.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-47, an act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code. The bill would officially bring Canada into line with the UN Arms Trade Treaty, also known as the ATT.

In a news release issued on April 13, after the bill was tabled, the government stated, “The ATT is about protecting people from arms.”

We have been hearing all day today from our friends across the way about people being harmed. It makes me wonder who the government wants to protect.

Law-abiding firearms owners and merchants are not a threat. In my experience as an RCMP officer, most weapons-related crimes in Canada are committed with firearms that are obtained illegally or usually stolen.

The history of firearms in Canada goes back as far as the country itself. Let us be fair. The Dominion of Canada Rifle Association was founded in 1868, and I do not think there is a province in Canada today that does not have a branch of that association. We have hunters who rely on firearms to provide food for their families as their forefathers did, as the earliest settlers in Canada did. We have farmers who rely on firearms to protect their livestock, as the early settlers did. We have sport shooters who rely on firearms to compete in competitions in the same way as a competitive tennis player relies on his or her tennis racket. We have firearms collectors who seek guns in the same way stamp collectors search for stamps.

The firearms community is a large and diverse group in Canada. These are law-abiding and responsible Canadians, yet the current government seems to think it needs to protect people from firearms. There is a lot of fearmongering today about all the deaths. Somebody before me just quoted that 80 women were raped because it was done at gunpoint and that two thousand people were dying each day because of guns. Let us truly look at where we are on this. Those members fail to realize that firearms have been part of many Canadians' livelihoods for decades.

As the previous speaker stated, we need to look at international gun control and we need to prevent the flow of illegal firearms. However, most important, we must listen to and hear from Canadians. One thing the Liberal government has failed to do is listen to Canadians.

When law-abiding firearms owners or Canadian companies purchase a weapon outside of Canada and wish to import it across the border, they must declare it to Canada Border Services Agency. A great deal of documentation is required and all this bill would do is add unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, red tape, and more cost.

It has been mentioned in the House many times today that Canada is probably one of the leading countries in the world with gun control. In fact, we have met 26 of the 28 standards in the ATT. We are probably much more regulated and have better gun control, quality control, export control, and import control than ATT will ever have.

Our previous Conservative government dealt with the UN Arms Trade Treaty when it came into force in December 2014. Its purpose, as we all have heard, is to regulate the international trade of arms so they are not used to support terrorism or international organized crime. I do not think there is anybody in this room who does not support that. I do not know about them, but I do not think farmer Joe in northern Saskatchewan is supporting international organized crime when he imports a rifle, whether he intends to use it for hunting, protecting his livestock, or sport shooting. We are going a

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bit overboard with the bill. That is why so many of us have stood on this side of the House and have spoken about our concerns. We are speaking for the average Canadian. They want to be heard, and that side does not want to hear them. We have to speak for them.

Our former Prime Minister Harper requested that civilian firearms be removed from this treaty in 2014, yet the UN ignored the request to respect the interests of Canadians and refused to remove civilians from the language of the treaty

● (1610)

What did our previous government do? We did not sign it. We stood up for Canadians. That is what the Liberal government is failing to do. We refused to sign the treaty at that time. The Liberal government is ready to sign a document that is not good for firearm owners. It does nothing to improve the safety of Canadians. This is my opinion. My colleagues across from me may disagree, but let me remind them of something.

The former foreign affairs minister, Stéphane Dion, even admitted this in his own press release issued in June 2016. To paraphrase, it stated that Canada already met the vast majority of its obligations. The treaty was designed to bring other countries up to the high standards that Canada already applied to its export control regime. Therefore, why are we going this way?

During the summer, I attended the Edson rod and gun club range. It is located in a remote part of my riding. The reason it is way out at the end of my riding is because it is one of the longest ranges in Canada. I went there because there was going to be a group called Got Your Six at the range that weekend. Its members were there last year, as was I. This is a group of current and retired military police, firemen, first responders, and civilians. It is a great organization. Members may not have heard of it. It is a charity shooting competition group that raises funds and creates awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Last year, it gathered for its first competitive shooting tournament. It was a popular event. It was amazing to watch the military and civilian marksmen hit a target a mile away time after time. More astounding to see was the camaraderie between the men and women, which is like a brotherhood, by shooting weapons in a competition. They were also gathered there to talk about and help others with post-traumatic stress disorder. That is only a small group of the thousands of Canadians who either sport shoot, hunt, or collect firearms.

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This year the same shooting competition quadrupled in attendance. Men and women came from across Canada, some for the competitiveness, many for the camaraderie and fellowship they share as the current and former guardians of our country and the world. These people are not a threat, even though there were all types of weapons there. These people are just a small representation of the thousands who enjoy shooting at local ranges, hunting, or collecting firearms. This bill would not help them in any way. Rather, it would only complicate things for them.

Before we spend a fortune in tax dollars limiting more rights and freedoms, is there a pressing and urgent need for Canada to join the UN Arms Trade Treaty? No.

From my experience, this treaty places undue hardship on law-abiding gun owners and merchants. Canada already implements and complies with the vast majority of the treaty's obligations. We are a safe and law-abiding country, so why this unnecessary change? Why are we punishing responsible firearms owners with this legislation if Canada already meets the vast majority of its obligations?

I can agree with the overall goal of the treaty that aims to prevent illegal transfers of arms that fuel conflict, encourage terrorism, and support organized crime. However, I am concerned that the Liberals have not consulted lawful gun owners. It is not a big surprise, or maybe it is a big surprise considering the number of consultations they have held on almost every other issue, or so they claim. Because of this lack of consultation, they are moving forward with an arms treaty that does not respect the legitimate trade or use of hunting and sporting firearms in this country.

I was alarmed at a statement of the parliamentary secretary in his opening remarks regarding the bill. He talked about how we must lead by example, which our country has done. His other remarks with respect to even more robust legislation to come scare me.

• (1615)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am trying to understand, from my colleague's speech, where he stands in terms of voting on this bill. He spent about 15 seconds saying that he supports the goal of Bill C-47. He then spent 9.5 minutes talking about something that is not an issue, but something we care deeply about and fully support, which is the lawful use of firearms by hunters, fishermen, and sports shooters.

That is not at issue in this bill. I am interested in and respect his strong feelings on the subject, but what I am interested in knowing is, will he vote for or against this bill, knowing that we would be the last G7 country to join our NATO partners and allies in ratifying this treaty?

If he does not vote for it, how will he explain that to Canadians? I am interested in hearing his answer.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I am quite willing to give the member my answer, which is no. It is not because I do not believe that we should participate, it is because the Liberal government did not consult with lawful gun owners. It is ramming it through, and shoving it down the throats of Canadians without proper consultation. That I cannot stand for. I will stand up for the lawful gun owners in my riding and across Canada who are law-abiding citizens.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, does the member agree that we should reduce our trade with states who abuse human rights?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I believe that Canada has a very robust system in place to ensure that we negotiate trade agreements and deals with other countries. We have shown due diligence in the past in how we deal with other countries regarding trade relations, and will do so in the future.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the group Got Your 6 very well. It was lovely to hear about the impact they are having on our military veterans and first responders. As the member is a Mountie veteran, he knows that, and wears it on his sleeve.

The problem is this. The Minister of Transport stated it much more eloquently than the parliamentary secretary, the member for Fredericton, who called asking a question about it bogus. Both members are incorrect. The United States will not fully implement this treaty.

Therefore, the minister was incorrect with respect to that statement, but more importantly, the fact is that the treaty rejected or excluded law-abiding orders. They are all saying it is not in there. The parliamentary secretary even said that asking the question is bogus. The fact that it was excluded means that one would imply that it could be collected from individual owners, their brokers, or both.

Although I know they are not included in the talking points the Liberals are using today, they are genuine questions. However, when law-abiding owners have not been consulted, can the member tell the House how that type of language, bogus and phony, answers the questions of rural Canadians on this issue, because being treated by the government that way creates division, and resurrects the feelings with respect to the Liberal gun registry?

• (1620)

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I probably intermingled with 200 to 300 people at the Got Your 6 event, people who have risked their lives to protect people around the world, including Canadians. Is the member saying that what those people want to do for recreation, and the concerns many of them have with respect to this act are bogus? They are law-abiding Canadians. That is why I am standing up to defend their actions. We should respect their concerns, and stand up for them.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak to this bill put forward by the Liberal government. During my tenure as parliamentary secretary to the minister of foreign affairs, I spoke many times to this bill on behalf of the government, and today I will speak about why there is opposition to this bill.

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It is very clear that this is one of the election promises the Liberal Party made during the campaign without thinking about it. From their broken promises, like electoral reform, we know the Liberals opposed anything the Conservative government was doing, even if it was doing everything legitimately. They only had one focus. They would not do what the Conservative government wanted to do, which is why, on many occasions, they had to break the promises they made during the election campaign.

Getting back to this bill, during the time I was in government, there were many questions as to why we were not going to sign the Arms Trade Treaty. I have the talking points of the department, the same department that I represented in Parliament at that time. It said this bill was to enhance transparency and accountability in Canada with export controls, and allow accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, which is the major issue.

We are talking about joining the Arms Trade Treaty. The Arms Trade Treaty already has provisions in it. On the major issue of whether that is the right approach to take, of course it is. There is no question that the Arms Trade Treaty is designed to reduce gun violence right across the world.

I travelled all over the world in my capacity as parliamentary secretary to the minister of foreign affairs and went to areas where conflicts were taking place. As a matter of fact, I met a child soldier in Burundi who carried an automatic rifle. The point is that most of the people in these conflicts are getting arms through illegal trade, which is thriving around the world.

How do ISIS members have so many arms to fight with? They got the arms that were abandoned by the army. Nevertheless, there is a vast arms trade where conflicts today are still going on. In Africa, where I have been on many occasions, conflicts carry on. Conflicts carry on in Rwanda and Congo. Conflicts carry on in Burundi. Conflicts have gone on and on, because the illegal arms trade is thriving and people can access weapons.

In contrast, the question is, would the Arms Trade Treaty prevent that? This bill is an attempt to do that, but in Canada, having taken many actions over a period of time, we have controls that, at times, do match and even exceed the Arms Trade Treaty. We do have export controls in our system that ensure we control our arms trade exports. The question was asked whether we should sell arms to countries that abuse human rights, or whether we should not trade with them. Trade would give us the leverage to ask them to improve their human rights records, but we can always decide who we are going to sell arms to.

The issue again is the illegal arms trade. The largest exporters of arms in the world are not going to sign this treaty, and if they are not going to sign it, then how will it have an effect? Would it become another of the UN treaties that does not have teeth in it because major players are not signing it? Anytime we sign an international treaty, the question we need to answer in Canada is, how will it impact the domestic scene?

• (1625)

My colleagues have already indicated this very eloquently. During the time the parliamentary secretary, the NDP, and the Liberals were

all asking us to sign the treaty, no one was talking about the impact on the domestic scene.

On the domestic scene, we have already indicated it could have a negative impact on sports gun owners. If it is going to have an impact, would there not then be two points to look at? Number one, is the treaty effective, because as I just pointed out, Russia and the U.S. will not sign it? Number two, will it have a negative impact on the domestic scene? Yes it will, as has already been indicated.

Therefore, what would be the point of signing something that has no value to us? Is it because the NDP and the Liberals want to look good and feel good, like sunny days, and sign the treaty? However, in reality, we are already doing it.

One of the reasons we did not sign it, when we were in government, was because it did not meet the major objectives. We already have and exceed a majority of those points that are mentioned in the treaty, but no one has addressed the issue of where it would overstretch itself in domestic laws. When we pointed this out to the UN, it did not want to change it. Maybe the reason was that in other parts of the world there was not enough sport hunting, or whatever. The fact of the matter is, when we are looking at Canada signing it, we must look at our laws to see how this would impact domestic laws. That has been made very clear.

It becomes pretty obvious that signing the treaty there would be three points. Number one, it was an election promise, and a thorough review was not carried out. Number two, this would impact domestic markets. Number three, it would not be very effective, because of the other players who export arms who will not be signing it.

We have said, and the government has said it, and I am sure my colleagues on the other side would agree, we need to make decisions ourselves as to who we are going to sell these products. Are we going to sell them to countries a, b, c? It is for us to decide, and we do have robust controls, and robust debates going on as to who we should and should not sell to.

One of the aspects of the treaty is that we take away these controls. The treaty would take away the controls from DND as to what it can decide, who can decide, and what it can do. Why are we giving our authority, our sovereignty, over to a treaty that is not a very strong treaty. If this was a very strong treaty, we could look at it. If the UN had come back and said it would take Canada's domestic concerns into account, then we would have signed it when we were in government.

I will just point out that it would not be in the interest of Canada to sign the treaty. We can take the provisions that are in the bill, if the government wants to, to enhance robust ways to ensure we have domestic controls, and exports controls, which we do. It is not a question that we do not have them. We already have them. Therefore, this bill and this whole thing is not really something that enhances anything around the world in stopping the arms flow, or the trade flow that is going on all over the world. Conflicts are going on, and we need to address the bigger issue.

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● (1630)

Conflicts are going on around the world. There are conflicts in Africa, conflicts in the Middle East. ISIL is a danger. All of these places are fuelled by arms from the illegal arms trade. We have seen the movie about the blood diamonds, and the Kimberley process was one way to stop the trade in blood diamonds, which was fuelling the illegal arms trade. That was something that we supported. That was a positive step taken internationally to stop the arms trade. These are the kinds of initiatives that we need to take.

It becomes critically important to see how the illegal arms trade is thriving. This is where we can go and where we can put our efforts. There is no point in telling us, because we already have it. It is not that we do not have a record. We already have it. We have good controls, so there is no point in our being penalized to do something that is not going to be effective because the treaty unfortunately does not have teeth.

We can continue. We can return to the UN and suggest we look at this whole thing again, but at this time we would not be supporting it because we do not think it is in the best interests of Canada to sign the Arms Trade Treaty.

On the international scene, the proliferation of arms is a major concern. The North Korea issue right now of firing ballistic missiles over Japan and not signing this treaty is a cause of concern. Whether it is nuclear weapons or small arms, proliferation is now on the rise around the world. Collectively we would have to go around and ask how we get there.

Following the Cambodian dictatorship, when thousands of people lost their lives, and now with the wars that are going on, there has been a terrible legacy of arms floating around in the world. The UN ought to do better and see how it can somehow get these arms back out of these places. I visited Cambodia and also saw how the mines in Mozambique were maiming people. We had a program to blow up the mines, and I actually had an opportunity to blow up a mine in Cambodia.

The dangers from conflicts and the arms that have been deployed are a cause of concern, and we must carry on addressing them. Of course we all remember that after the fall of the U.S.S.R., we came to remove nuclear weapons there so that they would be removed from the market. The issue is how we can access and address whatever is fuelling all these wars around the world.

Of course, a continuing issue here is what can be done with rogue countries that do not listen to these treaties and do not abide by the treaties. The best example is North Korea. It does not abide by any treaty and is now creating a very dangerous situation.

Having been to South Korea and North Korea and the demilitarized zone, I can tell members that it is a very dangerous situation. I talked to the South Koreans, who live under a constant threat that anything can happen. We can make very big statements, but those who live under this shadow have a very different experience, and they look to countries like ours to see how we can defuse the situation. Canada has a unique position in the world, with our diplomats and so on. We have a good reputation and we can use our good offices.

● (1635)

However, it is critically important that our good offices not be used to go out and sign something that is of no consequence. We should focus our energies on ensuring we get arms out of circulation so the illegal arms trade can be minimized and conflicts can be reduced. For example, how do the pirates in Somalia get their weapons? Where do they get their weapons from? How do all these people manage to get weapons? There are no weapons factories at all in Somalia. How does al Shabaab get its arms? These are issues we need to discuss. We need to find out how and why these terrorist groups have easy access to arms. Now we come along, bringing this treaty, and say that this will try to stop it. Well, this treaty is not going to stop it.

Domestically, Canada has robust controls over the arms industry. Canadians should be proud that because of robust arms controls, Canadian arms are not used overseas and are not part of the many conflicts going on. Should it come to light that this is not the case, we can take corrective actions.

Again, one needs to look at the larger picture and ask what we can do to achieve reduction of tensions and wars around the world. That is the objective of the government, as well as of the NDP at the United Nations. That is what we want to achieve. Working collaboratively, we can achieve that. However, when people say that we want to sign a treaty that is totally ineffective and intrudes on our laws locally, that will make Canadians uncomfortable. We already have robust controls to ensure we are not fuelling wars around the world with our arms. Canadians can be proud of that.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has spoken quite eloquently about how ineffective this treaty will be, yet his colleagues are suggesting it is going to do things it does not even say it is going to do. I am a little confused.

I would like to point out that the Government of Canada has required records on the export and import of arms since 1942 to ensure compliance with the Export and Import Permits Act. This legislation would make no changes to the type or nature of the information currently required from those individuals seeking to import or export arms. There is no change to the system that existed under the Conservative Party previously. They were happy with it then.

I am curious. What has changed for the member, and why does he not like it now?

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, it is very simple and straightforward. I said right from the beginning that there are two elements to this bill. One is to enhance transparency and accountability of the export controls, which are very robust. The member has just pointed out that we have had it since 1942. That does not change.

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Why are we going to go do that when, as you yourself have pointed out, it is already there. We are talking about the Arms Trade Treaty. We are not talking because someone says—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address the questions and comments to the Chair and not to individual members.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, after 20 years, I should have known that, I should be doing that. I apologize.

We are talking about the Arms Trade Treaty. The treaty is what concerns this bill, and not the controls. The hon. member has pointed out rightly that we clearly have robust controls in this country.

● (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn for his fact and opinion filled speech.

He will forgive me for asking a question that may have already been asked, but I would like to know his reaction to the fact that trucks manufactured in Canada are sold in Saudi Arabia and are used against civilians. I would simply like his opinion on that.

[English]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, we have a robust relationship with Saudi Arabia, both in trade and politically. I have been to Saudi Arabia many times. If we see credible evidence that this is what is happening, it allows us, through our connections with Saudi Arabia, to talk to the Saudis and tell them that this is unacceptable and that our vehicles cannot be used to suppress human rights. It is very clear—and that is the whole point—that within our control regime, we do have the ability to tell them that if they are doing that, they did wrong.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am continuing to focus on how the government, in its approach to debate on this subject, is suggesting that any Canadian who may have a question about the breadth of this treaty and its application is somehow making bogus arguments. We have heard many of our members suggest specific passages in the legislation, by reference to the treaty, that they have concerns with. We have heard that a specific exclusion of lawful firearms owners, hunters, sport shooters, and things like that, was rejected throughout the treaty process.

When we approach statutory interpretation, if there is silence or uncertainty, we sometimes will read in favour of what the treaty or the piece of legislation is trying to do. Therefore, the silence here is a genuine question. Could the member tell us his thoughts, as the dean of our caucus, on how that attitude of not listening to valid concerns of Canadians back in the mid-1990s, when a different Liberal government was introducing a long-gun registry, made people feel like they were part of the problem, because their questions and any concerns they had were not even taken as genuine?

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Durham for his new position as critic for foreign affairs. I am sure he is going to do a great job holding the government accountable.

Coming to that point, when I am speaking very clearly as the dean of the caucus knowing about this, the other side is just presenting

talking points that were given to them to justify this. They have not been told what is wrong and what is not wrong. They have just been saying to go ahead on this thing.

It is our job on the opposition side to say what is wrong with what they are doing and what they have done. Therefore, naturally, we will not expect them to give an answer to us, but just stick to their talking points. As we all know, all my colleagues have stood up and said very strongly why we do not want to sign this treaty.

To answer my friend's question, they are relying on their talking points.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member across the way continually tries to regurgitate an issue from the 1990s, knowing full well that this legislation has absolutely nothing to do with the gun registry. The members across the way know that. That is the reality. They then try to say that the government is not listening to Canadians. There has been no government in recent history that has listened to Canadians more than this government.

I would challenge the members across the way. Under Stephen Harper, how many town halls, outreach programs, and consultations were done under the Harper government over 10 years? They could count them on one hand.

The Conservatives need to calm themselves down and not get too excited. This has nothing to do with the gun registry. I am sorry to disappoint them all, but that is the reality.

The member has travelled all over the world. Does he not believe, as Liberals believe, that Canada has a leadership role to play in the world? This is an arms treaty, the first of its kind, and it can have a profound, positive impact at making our world a better, safer place to live. The Conservatives would do well by supporting the legislation, just like every other G7 country and NATO country. You name it—

● (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I thoroughly enjoy hearing my colleague whenever he stands up. He used to stand up with the same rhetoric when he was in the opposition, talking the same way as he does now. Now that he is on the other side, nothing has changed. It is the same old rhetoric. All he cares about is that there was a consultation. He should really look back and ask himself why he did not follow through on electoral reform. Why did he not follow through? What is he doing now with the small business tax? What information and what consultation is he doing? One minute the Liberals say they are doing consultations and the next minute we hear the Prime Minister say that he is not going to change it. Is that consultation? All these things tell us to take a nice little breath.

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Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it has been a matter of shock and dismay to hear my colleagues from Conservative benches claim that anyone who reads this bill with an open mind, as I have, and cannot see a single thing that could possibly lead to an impact on domestic gun sales is somehow blinded by talking points. As an opposition member, I have a lot that I want fixed in Bill C-47, such as the loopholes that would allow weapons to be sold through the United States.

This is the Arms Trade Treaty. Its terms as a treaty speak directly to the illicit trade in arms, and the global export of arms. The Conservative talking points to create fear among legal gun owners make as much sense as complaining that in the acid rain negotiations the government of the day never consulted with people who make umbrellas.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, when I was on the other side, the member brought the same question, and I already answered that.

These are not talking points. The fact of the matter is that we have pointed out and we keep pointing out what is wrong with the Arms Trade Treaty. This is the issue we have pointed out correctly over here: that it would impact us on domestic things. Whether she agrees or not is not the issue.

She may not see it, but others have, such as my colleague who was going to read all of the letters that he got from gun owners saying what is wrong with the bill. This is maybe how she should be consulting to get a broader picture on how things happen.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, The Environment; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Status of Women; the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia, Public Safety.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-47. Before I speak to the bill itself, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn for his learned comments. As he mentioned, he is the dean of our caucus and was first elected to this place on October 2, 1997, when I was in grade 7. I believe he holds the record as the longest serving parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs. It is always a pleasure to speak in his shadow.

I will be splitting my time with my friend and colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. I look forward to his comments as well on this important issue.

I find it interesting that we are debating Bill C-47 today because, after all, this legislation was first tabled in the House of Commons on April 13, 2017, more than five months ago. Granted there was a summer recess in-between.

Over the summer, like many colleagues I had the opportunity to travel around my riding, host round tables, speak to constituents, hold stakeholder meetings, go to people's homes and speak about the

important issues that are affecting them. I did hear about the ATT on a handful of occasions. I heard from a couple of people who were in favour of it and a couple of dozen who were opposed. That is the joy of democracy; there are people on both sides of the issues.

I find it interesting that we are debating this today when the opposition has yet to be given a single supply day in this period. We have also been told that there will be no supply day next week as well. Here we are debating the government's agenda but have been given zero opportunities to raise a motion in the allotted days we are entitled to as the official opposition. Is the government simply trying to avoid accountability on key issues that it knows it is hiding from? An example is the changes to the tax rules.

As I travelled in my riding this summer, I talked to people about these tax changes. I talked to farmers who want to pass on their farm to their daughters or sons, but these tax changes would potentially prevent them from doing so. I talked to the small business owner who may want to hire one or two more people but may not do so because of uncertainty. Family doctors are concerned because the changes may potentially impact their patients. These are people I am hearing from in my riding but here we are debating Bill C-47.

We are debating this treaty and its implementation today, which is interesting because the mechanisms that we have in place today, the rules that have been in place in Canada for many decades, already achieve what the government purports to want to achieve through Bill C-47.

A perfect case in point is that since the 1940s, through the Export and Import Permits Act, the government has had the ability to exclude and prevent the sale and export of any number of items, including what it is trying to achieve through this legislation. One need only look at the export control list under the auspices of the Export and Import Permits Act to find that much of what the government is trying to achieve is already in place: group 1, dual use; group 2, munitions; group 3, nuclear proliferation; and group 4, nuclear-related dual use.

The government is once again using a symbolic gesture in an area where issues are already addressed through existing mechanisms that previous governments of all stripes have put in place over the years. For it to try to change to a system with no noticeable improvement is unfortunate and, frankly, not a good use of the House's time when there is so much more that we parliamentarians, that we Canadians, can be debating in this place on behalf of our constituents.

The collection of data, the collection of information, is also interesting when the fact of the matter is that under the regimes that are currently in place here in Canada through the Canada Border Services Agency and Statistics Canada, a lot of the information on items that are exported from Canada is already being collected and provided to the appropriate agencies within Canada, and yet the government here today is bringing in yet another bill to collect information that is already being collected.

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● (1650)

What is interesting as well is that this is not the only tool at the disposal of the government. The government has many opportunities to restrict the sale of goods to foreign entities. One example is the area control list. Currently the only country that Canada has placed on that list is North Korea, but it is certainly open to the government to place any number of countries on that list if it has sufficient grounds to cut off all exports to that country. I do not think there is anyone in this chamber who would disagree with placing North Korea on that list. I think that would be right and correct, and all Canadians would agree with that.

If the government has concerns about another entity, as it has in the past, for example, with Myanmar and Belarus, which have both been on this list, the government could register those concerns through the area control list and add a certain country to the list to block exports altogether to that country. That is especially the case when we are looking at regimes that may use any number of products against their own citizens or against those in the region, something that we would strongly oppose.

I find it interesting to talk about the measures that are already in place and their strength, but do not always just take our word for it. I would like to quote a government official, from a June 2016 *Globe and Mail* article. In the article he is quote as saying that he believes we already have sufficient restrictions on arms exports:

“Canada already has some of the strongest export controls in the world which means that we already meet the vast majority of the obligations under the arms trade treaty,” said the senior official in a briefing.

In a real sense, this treaty was designed to bring other countries—many of whom have no export control regimes in place—up to the high standards that Canada and our like-minded allies already apply through our robust export control regimes,” the official said.

That brings me to my next point, the other countries that are missing from the ATT, namely Russia, China, India, and the United States, which has signed it but not yet ratified it. Whether or not it will is not a decision for this House to make, but certainly one that is questionable given where it now is.

That is not say that we as Canadians should not act on the world stage. Certainly, we Canadians have always played a leadership role on the world stage. I think of our former government playing that leading role internationally on a number of fronts over the past 10 years.

However, to sign on to this treaty and to bring forward the legislation to ratify it at this point, without the key players having signed on or ratified it, I think is a challenge. Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree that it raises more concerns than it answers.

In preparing a few remarks for today, I came across the press release from Global Affairs Canada when this bill was tabled on April 13, 2017. It states:

To implement necessary changes, in March 2017 Canada announced an investment of \$13 million to further strengthen the country’s export control regime.

Granted, I was relatively young in 1995, but I remember another Liberal government promising that a certain long-gun registry would cost \$2 million, and yet, over the years, the Auditor General found it cost upwards of a \$1 billion.

I find it interesting that the government is proposing a \$13 million price tag, but has not yet tabled a coherent plan for how that \$13 million will be spent and where the cost overrides may or may not arise if that \$13 million is used up relatively quickly.

I have heard members on the other side go as far as saying that claims or concerns of law-abiding gun owners are “bogus”. It is really bringing down the tone and the level of debate in the House to dismiss the concerns of legitimate, law-abiding gun owners as bogus.

● (1655)

I am very proud of my family. My late grandfather came to Canada in 1952. In 1974, he helped co-found the Swiss Rifle Club near my home town of Mitchell. I was proud, as a kid, to have been able to join him and my father at the rifle range to learn about the safety of guns and rifles, and I am proud of the legitimate gun owners in my riding and across Canada.

I know that my time has come to an end, but I look forward to continued debate on this matter and the questions that may come my way.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not about a gun registry, which the member spent some time talking about, but about a UN Arms Trade Treaty. We heard some very compelling stories earlier from a member’s speech about women in the Congo noticing that we had not signed on to this agreement, talking about arms trade and how it was used for sexual violence in other countries, and that it was actually a stain on the way our country was viewed in other countries internationally that we had not yet signed this treaty.

Speaking to the issue at hand, what this is truly about, which is signing on to this Arms Trade Treaty, does he oppose our signing on to this agreement?

● (1700)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is very simple. The rules and mechanisms already in place, from a Canadian perspective, in most cases—and I would dare say in all cases—far exceed what was being proposed in the ATT. For Canada to sign on to the ATT goes against what we have already achieved in this country. I do not want to read anything into the hon. member’s comments, but I think what she would be concerned about is the international community and many of the other countries that have not signed on to this deal and will not sign on to this deal but are continuing to participate in activities that are vile and reprehensible. We can all agree that the example of Congo is a terrible situation, absolutely abhorrent, and something that all Canadians oppose. We can think of examples worldwide where there are terrible atrocities, which we, as Canadians and human beings, strongly oppose in the strongest language possible.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do the member and the Conservative Party agree that Canada should reduce trade with countries that abuse human rights?

Government Orders

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, we as Canadians and as a Parliament need to overwhelmingly condemn human rights abuses wherever they may be found. It falls to the government in office to take action and make sanctions where appropriate, but as Canadians, parliamentarians, and human beings, we must call out human rights abuses wherever they may be found. I know in my party, and hopefully in all parties, what is happening currently in Myanmar is a good example of where those actions and language must be taken very strongly.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the good fortune of visiting the riding of the member for Perth—Wellington not just for the lovely theatre in Stratford but for a business round table. I know that the member for Toronto—Danforth would have heard the same concerns I heard there from small business, because she has been critical of her government's ham-fisted approach to small business. We heard it that day at that round table.

I have a theory. Perhaps the government is signing on to this one UN treaty because it is planning to withdraw from three other treaties. I will name them: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs that Canada has been a signatory to since 1961; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971; and the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988. The Prime Minister's direction with respect to marijuana means that the government is going to possibly have to withdraw from those three UN treaties.

Is it the opinion of the member that this could be a one-for-three treaty swap?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Durham for his great question and hard work over the summer. I know he went to many round tables, but I appreciate his coming to my riding.

I think he is probably right, but the interesting challenge with withdrawing from those three UN treaties is that the government simply does not have time to do that in the time period before July 1, 2018, its arbitrary deadline for the introduction of the marijuana legislation, which it promised to do by July 1. It may well want to withdraw, but it has missed the boat in terms of signing on in time. Withdrawing from three and signing on to one is an interesting theory. I just wish it would do that with some of the regulatory burden and red tape that, writ large, is happening. If it could eliminate three barriers to small businesses in favour of one, that is a three-for-one deal that I could really get behind.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the debate on Bill C-47, the act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code.

When it comes to imports and exports, the Canada Border Services Agency officers are on the front lines. They are responsible for enforcing the Canadian laws governing the people and goods that come into our country.

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge the CBSA's officers, because the work they do and the huge responsibility they have in keeping Canadians safe and keeping goods moving into our country rarely make the headlines. I think every member in this House is aware of how important CBSA officers are. They keep our

country safe, and I know I speak for many when I thank them for their dedication and their vigilance.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the Customs and Immigration Union for their leadership. I want to thank the national president, Jean-Pierre Fortin, and his team for the fantastic work they are doing. My team and I will be meeting with Mr. Fortin very shortly for what we expect to be some very fruitful and informative discussions.

• (1705)

[*English*]

Let me be clear about this. The Conservative Party has always supported efforts to establish international standards for arms transfers that help prevent illicit transfers that fuel conflicts and encourage terrorism or organized crime. We also believe that the treaty in question should recognize and acknowledge the legitimacy of lawful firearm ownership by responsible citizens for their personal and recreational use, including sports shooting, hunting, and collecting.

The spirit of such a treaty would obviously focus on military and security equipment. If the treaty language cannot make the difference between military equipment and hunters and sportsmen, that language must be reviewed.

In September 2016, the CSSA, the Canadian Shooting Sports Association, called on Minister of Foreign Affairs to re-examine, re-evaluate, and re-think the decision on the treaty. In other words, the Liberals are sloppy in their approach to representing Canadians. As a matter of fact, it leaves Canadians unsure of who the Prime Minister is working for. Is he looking to impress the U.N. or is his heart with Canadians?

[*Translation*]

The Liberals are unfair to Canadians. As is the case for small business, there have been no consultations addressing concerns about how this bill could affect hunters, sports shooters, and recreational users. The Liberals have never been very concerned about these people and have never taken them seriously in the past. Today, the same thing is happening. The Liberals do not care about them and in light of the bill they introduced, Bill C-47, I am convinced that they have no intention of considering their concerns in the future, either.

Canada already has an internal system for monitoring and controlling the exports of military and security equipment, which meets and even exceeds the conditions of the UN treaty. The government will therefore have to demonstrate why we need to enhance the process already in place.

The Government of Canada's Trade Controls Bureau is responsible for enforcing the Export and Import Permits Act. This bureau has made it possible for the minister to prevent the sale of military equipment to various countries for many reasons, including security risks.

The Liberals must explain what precisely it is missing. We have yet to be shown that the Trade Controls Bureau is not effective. We already have what we need in Canada.

Government Orders

Canada already limits the movement of military material that is strategically used in two ways, including nuclear energy and materials, missiles, chemical or biological products, and cryptologic equipment.

[*English*]

I spoke earlier of the CBSA role. CBSA and Statistics Canada collect information on all items exported from Canada and classify the information using categories negotiated by the World Customs Organization. Do members think we are doing enough? I think so. Now, if that is not enough, I will also tell members that Canada has a blanket ban on risk countries under the Export and Import Permit Act.

Through an act of Governor in Council, a country can be placed on that list. Therefore, we are well covered here. However, the Liberals have tabled Bill C-47, and the burden is on them to show why we must sign this treaty.

Canada is already doing better than the treaty in question. Canada is a world leader in the diplomatic process. Canada is a model for other countries to follow, not the other way around. I am proud of my country. I am proud of our parliamentary system. I am proud that Canada is easily the best country in the world to live, to work, and to raise a family.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Since we will be debating this bill over the next few days, I hope that we can talk about it from the standpoint of what is currently happening in Canada. Canadians' needs have to be considered as we debate this bill. Then we can consider the needs of the UN.

Let us not forget that we could work with our NATO and UN allies, and that we will continue to do so, for example to restrict arms sales to North Korea.

We will also work in conflict zones and we will prevent anyone who might threaten world peace from pursuing technological activities. Of course, Canada will always be a partner for peace.

When we talk about responsible countries leading the way by example, no country other than Canada comes to mind. Countries that do better than Canada simply do not exist. It is time that we recognized that.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that often comes up in my riding is the long-gun registry. Firearms owners in my riding do not trust the Liberals when it comes to firearms and firearm registries in our country. I hear from them all the time their concerns that this is the first step in bringing forward a long-gun registry. I wonder if my colleague has any comment on that, and in particular how it would affect perhaps also the sovereignty of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, that was a very good question from my colleague.

Indeed, we have seen that the Liberals have always hated hunters, the honest people of this land, because they still want to bring back the long-gun registry.

This UN treaty covers hunting firearms, not just military-grade weapons and missiles. In fact the treaty mentions hunting firearms. This means the gun manufacturers and their customers will have trouble buying and selling hunting rifles. To please the UN, we are going to make the law-abiding hunters of Canada pay the price. Maybe the Prime Minister is acting this way because he is hoping for a Nobel Peace Prize, who knows.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the member. I will be asking the question in English. I am working on my French, and hopefully soon I will be able to ask him in the proper language.

I am very frustrated with how many people who have intervened today are reading so much into the bill. I ran in 2011, and I can assure everyone in the House I have absolutely no interest in talking about the gun registry.

My question for the member is this. Has the member had a chance to read the definition of “broker” under proposed amended subsection 2(1), which specifically defines “broker” as someone performing the transaction of arms from one foreign country to another? Could the member explain what this possibly has to do with domestic guns? How does this have anything to do those good Canadians who own guns, who are responsible gun owners?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. Even if he did ask it in English, he did so very politely.

My colleague raises an issue with Bill C-47 that merits discussion. He wants to know if I have seen the provision about brokering. It just goes to show that instead of clearly stating whether hunting firearms are excluded or not, this government is using jargon to try to throw people off. This issue will certainly need to be discussed and clarified to determine whether the UN treaty protects hunters, who are law-abiding citizens. That needs to be spelled out clearly and if it is not, we should not join this treaty.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to try to ask my question in French.

When I read Bill C-47 I cannot fathom how it would apply to Canada's hunters. That is incredible. It is not possible. I studied law and I worked as a lawyer, and it seems impossible to me.

Can the member explain it to me and show me the words in the Bill that apply to hunters?

• (1715)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent French. We take part in the debates in the House to try to understand one another, as colleagues. We need to explain ourselves.

Government Orders

The problem with Bill C-47 is the implementation of a UN treaty that has indirect implications for hunting firearms. If it is not clear in Bill C-47, there is a problem, and that is why we cannot pass such a bill.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):

[Member spoke in aboriginal language]

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to inform you that I will be splitting my time, but I have not yet been told with whom.

I would like to start by saying that we will be supporting this bill at second reading, even though we are not completely satisfied with its contents. There are gaps. In fact, as my colleagues mentioned, there are gaps and serious concerns that we want to raise during this debate and also in committee.

Furthermore, the concerns that this bill raises, at least for our party, are rather important. In fact, it is impossible to determine whether the countries we sell arms to violate the most basic rights, that is, human rights. This is a fundamental concern because respecting these rights is one of our obligations as a country.

Under paragraph 3 of article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, we have responsibilities and obligations to respect and promote human rights, fundamental rights, and rights and freedoms.

I also invite my colleagues to read articles 55 and 56 of the UN charter to which Canada is bound as a country. It is absolutely essential that we understand this responsibility that we have as a country when we discuss, negotiate, and sign international agreements.

To me, this is the legislative framework in international law that must guide us in this type of discussion, both internationally and domestically. We must always keep these responsibilities in mind.

We have an opportunity to improve the text before us in light of the first two points I mentioned. It is part of our responsibility as elected members. We need to be transparent every time we introduce a bill, including every time we introduce one that will have an impact on human rights. That is the practice in international law. In fact, when we sign international treaties, especially free trade agreements, international law practice is to verify the repercussions of those treaties on human rights. Similarly, some countries verify for the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples. That is a good example that I will come back to. Some countries that sign free trade agreements make sure to consider the consequences of those agreements to the rights of indigenous peoples. It is easy to imagine the same scenario in this discussion on renewing the North American Free Trade Agreement. Let us not forget that every time we sign agreements, there are repercussions on the country's natural resources, for instance.

● (1720)

Even though under our Constitution natural resources fall within provincial jurisdiction, the Supreme Court has already indicated and reaffirmed several times that these jurisdictions are not absolute, particularly when they affect other aspects, such as the constitutional

rights of indigenous people, as is the case here. It is important that we keep these things in mind in this discussion.

As I was also saying, one of the major concerns we have on this side of the House with regard to this bill is that it does not include an assessment process prior to authorization of export permits. I find that completely unacceptable. I spent over 20 years on the international stage negotiating one of the most important UN human rights declarations, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Those negotiations, which could not have been more multilateral, took 23 years. Sometimes there were over 1,000 people in the room, all talking, deliberating, and drafting this all-important document, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Prime Minister even mentioned that document before the UN today, as did the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs last year.

It is important to understand that this prior assessment is crucial if we want to play a leadership role on the world stage. I know that, for almost 10 years before this government came to power, that aspect of our responsibility as a state and our role on the world stage were somewhat neglected. I worked with the United Nations for 23 years before the Conservatives came to power in 2006, and during that time, whenever Canada took the floor at an international forum, the world listened.

When we talk about international and foreign affairs here, we must ensure that our decision-making is principled, particularly when it comes to human rights. We must make sure of that if we want to reclaim the status we once enjoyed.

I see that I have just one minute left.

● (1725)

The Speaker: The member has a minute and a half to complete his speech before questions and comments.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I will try to wrap things up. My point is that our role on the world stage is an important one. I wanted to share an example about how we all know that, in conflict zones, the most vulnerable people are women, girls, and children. That is why we have to make sure the bill contains measures to protect the basic rights of those children, those girls, those women. The international framework is already in place. All we have to do is meet our obligations under international law. I think that is one of the major omissions in this bill.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

On this side of the aisle, we share his view that it is time for Canada to reclaim its role as a world leader. We are working hard every day to reaffirm that Canada is here to help make the world a safer, fairer, and more peaceful place.

I just wanted to clarify one point raised by my colleague. Maybe I misunderstood, and if so I apologize, but this bill definitely does create a legal obligation for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take into account certain mandatory considerations before issuing an export permit or brokering permit. That is definitely what this bill is trying to do.

Have I misunderstood my colleague, or has he not understood the intent of this bill?

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate this question, because one of the problems with this bill is the fact that it is not clear on this point. We need to make sure the rules we adopt in this type of situation are very clear and are enshrined in the act, not in the regulations. That is the main point that needs to be made, because that is not the case right now.

Polls show that the majority of Canadians are against signing arms deals with countries that are human rights abusers. When it comes to dealing arms to countries with a poor or questionable human rights record, being very clear on this point should be our number one priority.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks, since the 1940s Canada has had a regime in place to control, track, and regulate the export of military equipment, nuclear, biological, a whole range of items. That has been done very well and effectively.

As the former minister of the government for foreign affairs has acknowledged, and who we have quoted, many aspects of what we have already been doing for decades meet and exceed what is in the ATT.

I would like the member's thoughts on whether it is reasonable for hunters and sports shooters across the country to have a question about things? We keep hearing Liberal after Liberal saying that it is not in here and that it does not deal with this, even though there are genuine questions on it.

I remind the Liberals that sometimes a legislature's failure to mention something is grounds to infer that it was deliberately excluded. People were asking for a carve out or an exception for hunters and sports shooters, lawful users of firearms. The very fact that it was not included in either the treaty or in Bill C-47 leads some to infer it was deliberately excluded. This is a legal principle, and it is reasonable.

Does the member think it is reasonable for these people to ask these questions while this bill is being pushed through the House?

• (1730)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I am part of the last generation of Crees born on the land. I spent the first seven years of my life hunting, fishing, and trapping out on the land before being sent to a residential school for 10 years. I can tell the member that I have several guns in my home, and there is absolutely no provision in this legislation that threatens my right to have those guns. I have not found any. If he has a provision, I would like to read it.

There are many more important issues. My main preoccupation is human rights in this particular case. I have been fighting for human

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rights all my life. As a member of Parliament, who has a duty to uphold the rule of law, I want to make sure human rights are always protected in whatever we do legislatively in this place.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:32 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-338, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (punishment), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it brings me no pleasure to have to speak to this bill, because it has to do with a crisis Canada is currently facing, the opioid crisis. The United States is also grappling with the same crisis, which has been the subject of many discussions.

Unfortunately, Bill C-338 fails miserably in its approach. As the NDP public safety critic, I want to point out that the opioid crisis is not so much a public safety issue as it is a public health issue. It is important to make that distinction with respect to Bill C-338, since all it does is propose heavier penalties, like the infamous mandatory minimum sentences we saw so often when the Conservatives were in power. So far, anywhere you look around the world, mandatory minimums have failed completely in terms of their intended objective, that is, to put an end to the scourge facing our society.

Every policy, medical, and legal expert tells us the same thing: the solution to this crisis is to provide more mental health and addiction treatment services and more resources to the hardest-hit communities that are dealing with the consequences daily. For example, the mayor of Vancouver has had a lot to say about this, since the statistics coming out of British Columbia on the number of deaths caused by this crisis are terrifying, especially for a province in a country like Canada.

For nine years we had a Conservative government that said that the solution to drug trafficking and public health problems was to impose harsher sentences, the infamous mandatory minimums. Even in the American states that are commonly referred to as "red states", where Republicans share many of the ideological opinions of our Conservative colleagues, it was determined that such sentences were a failure. This approach does not work, and it does not prevent the tragedies we are currently seeing.

To see why this is more a public health issue than a public safety one, we can look at supervised injection sites. All across Canada, especially in big cities that are grappling with this crisis and that want to protect citizens struggling with addiction issues, people have pushed for supervised injections sites and other solutions.

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During the previous Parliament, the federal government kept plugging its community consultation line as an excuse to pass legislation making supervised injection sites even harder to set up, even though municipal and provincial elected officials representing those very communities were asking it to authorize them. Rather than solve the problem, the government created conditions that endangered public safety. People's lives were put at risk because they did not have the resources to get help if they were dying of an overdose in some alleyway. I do not want to get into too much detail here.

The Liberal government took way too long to move on this, but at least it moved, and while that is commendable, there is still more work to do. The member for Vancouver Kingsway, our health critic, represents one of the first provinces to face this problem, a region with some of the most terrifying opioid statistics of all.

• (1735)

He asked the question again today: when will this government recognize that this is a national health crisis and declare this to be a pan-Canadian crisis? This has yet to be done, even though it is such an easy step to take so as to ensure that governments could begin taking appropriate action to protect Canadians.

I would go so far as to say that for 30, 40, or even 50 years, the approach taken by the right in the war against drugs has always been to take aim at the criminal element. In the meantime, the ones who were truly forgotten were the Canadians who unfortunately are among these statistics and who lost their lives because we, the legislators, were unable to help them.

Having considered Bill C-388, we oppose it, because we believe that the solution does not lie in putting more resources into fighting crime and putting people in jail. The solution is to help them. We must help these people face their substance abuse problems. We must help those who suffer from a mental illness by ensuring that we provide the care they need and want. We must help protect these citizens.

If we want to discuss public safety, we must first discuss public health. That is what the crisis is about. That is what is being neglected in the approach set out in this bill, which, unfortunately, is similar to the approach that prevailed for many years, especially in the years when there was a majority Conservative government. It was a failure.

We are not the ones saying so. The statistics on recidivism and substance abuse are clear. Today's statistics on this problem indicate that this is not just happening in Vancouver, British Columbia. As people know all too well, this problem is unfortunately affecting the entire country. The problem is moving eastward and is starting to become a reality in the maritime provinces and Atlantic Canada. This should be unacceptable in a society such as ours.

Statistics aside, this is also a legal issue. The Supreme Court has found that minimum mandatory sentences are not going to help us prevent recidivism and protect Canadians. The most vulnerable victims of the opioid crisis and other crises related to drug use and drug trafficking are the users themselves.

The government says they are proposing legislation to protect victims and vulnerable populations, but in a drug crisis like this, the

real victims, the real vulnerable population, are the Canadians dying from opioids before our very eyes. What this tells us is that, as I have said many times before, this is a public health issue.

Let us stop talking about how long we can put people in prison for. Let us stop thinking that rehabilitation is what is really going to help people recover from their mental health problems. Let us take their needs seriously, along with the needs identified by local authorities, such as the health and justice ministers in the provinces dealing with these tragedies, and municipal officials, such as the mayor of Vancouver, who is asking for help and more authority to develop tools like supervised injection sites to help these people start to heal. That is the approach we should be promoting.

I would like to close by saying that we have concerns about this approach. We recognize that it is a step in the right direction, but there is still a lot of work to be done to eliminate this problem, which is no longer just a regional issue. It is affecting all of Canada and even North America. These problems are being raised in discussions with American counterparts and between ministers. That proves that we need to take the issue seriously. Let us declare it to be a pan-Canadian health crisis. That would allow the government to do what is necessary. I have said it many times, and the NDP will continue to repeat it, that this is first and foremost a public health issue.

• (1740)

Let us help and protect these individuals, for they are the victims.

[English]

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-338. This private member's bill has been brought forward by my Conservative colleague, the member for Markham—Unionville. The member has an obvious genuine concern for his own community and those across Canada. He recognizes the harmful effects that drugs have had in his own city and he has stepped up to do something about it by bringing forward this legislation, so I thank the hon. member for the work that he has done on this bill.

Drugs have been around for as long as anyone can remember, so why the urgency now? The reality is that the drug scene today is nothing like it was in the past. The Internet has made drugs far more accessible. International shipping has made drug distribution both more efficient and more difficult to stop. The growth in the highly addictive and extremely deadly drugs like fentanyl and carfentanil has made drugs more deadly than ever. As I have said in this House before, the best way to combat our drug and opioid crisis is to stop the illicit supply from coming into this country and trading on our streets.

Private Members' Business

Before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, the RCMP testified that 98% of the illegal opioids in this country are coming from China. This is not a new problem. Work was started under the Stephen Harper government to stem this tide of drugs flowing onto our streets. It culminated recently in an agreement with China that should have some effect—at least, we hope it will have some effect. The Public Health Agency of Canada reported that almost 2,500 Canadians died from opioid overdoses in 2016. This year, that number is expected to exceed 3,000 deaths. That is eight people a day dying from drugs, eight families a day dealing with an unexpected death.

Bill C-338 would target those who are working to bring drugs onto our streets and into our neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, even if we do catch those responsible for shipping these deadly drugs, the punishment that awaits them is insufficient and hardly a deterrent for protection of our communities.

As proposed section 1 states in the bill, if the amount of drugs involved is less than one kilogram, the offender would be subject to a maximum of life in prison with a minimum of a two-year sentence. This would increase the minimum sentence from one to two years. Proposed section 2 in the bill states that if the amount of drugs involved is more than one kilogram, the offender would be subject to a maximum of life in prison with a minimum of a three-year sentence. This would be an increase from two to three years in this minimum sentence.

One of the most dangerous drugs on the street today is carfentanil. It can kill in the smallest amounts. The equivalent of less than a grain of salt can kill. Simply touching the drug can potentially kill. First responders are at a high risk of death. I am not trying to be an alarmist here; I am just reporting the reality. Young children are dying after coming into contact with this drug. Even just the residue on clothing can be deadly to a small child.

In June 2016, Canadian border services intercepted one kilogram of carfentanil en route to my city of Calgary. RCMP Inspector Allan Lai said, “One kilogram of carfentanil can produce approximately 50 million fatal doses.” That is enough to kill every man, every woman, and every child in Canada one and a half times over. If we are going to turn this tide, we need to equip our courts with the tools that they need to remove these dealers of death from our streets.

Alberta Health Services, in my province, has found that 343 people died from fentanyl overdoses in 2016. This is a whopping 33% increase over 2015, and a horrifying 110% rise from just two years ago. A doubling of the death rate in just two years is incredible. It is disgusting. Calgary experienced the worst of it. Half of the province's deaths were in Calgary.

• (1745)

Of those 343 deaths in Alberta in 2016, 22 were linked to carfentanil. In the first five months of this year, more Albertans died from carfentanil than in all of last year, and the body count continues to grow. Albertans are dying at a rate of more than one a day from opioid overdoses alone.

We need to give our courts the tools and the willpower to keep the drug pushers and traffickers off our streets where they cannot do harm. We need to show our law enforcement that their tireless efforts

and risky work was worth it. We need to show our first responders that we recognize the dangers they face, and we are looking to reduce potential harm. We need to show our overworked medical staff, those who see the damage daily, that we are trying to save lives as much as they are.

We need to show our communities that their safety and security is under threat, and we are taking action. Most of all, we need to show Canadian families we are doing what we can to better protect their children, their brothers, their sisters, and in some cases, sadly, their parents.

The reality is that the Liberals will not support our efforts to make these changes set out in Bill C-338. The Liberal government is working hard to expedite legislation that would make it legal for children to carry up to five grams of marijuana, while defeating Conservative attempts to jail drug dealers. The NDP members are even worse. Some of them are suggesting we legalize all drugs. This cavalier attitude toward drugs has consequences, and eight times a day, we are reminded of what is at stake.

I am not naive. I know we cannot simply increase all penalties and think it will magically make everyone follow the law. However, we are talking about people who cruise our streets, literally handing out death pills. I know we are all safer if they are in prison, and not on our streets or in our communities.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote in support of this legislation, and let it go to committee for further review. We need to tackle the importing and trafficking of drugs to stop this problem from getting any worse. If my colleagues across think the bill can be improved, then let us do it. Let this proposal go to committee. Let us hear from experts, and let us just do something.

Voting down this legislation is tantamount to doing nothing as Canadians increasingly die around us. Let us do something. Let us do the right thing. Let us vote in favour of the bill.

• (1750)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-338, which proposes to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to increase mandatory minimum penalties, or MMPs, of imprisonment for offences relating to the importation and exportation of certain drugs and substances.

I would like to begin by commending my hon. colleague across the way for bringing forward this private member's bill. It will encourage and foster an ongoing and important discussion regarding how we best regulate controlled substances.

[*Translation*]

Let me also say that I have been listening carefully to the debate on Bill C-338 and I would like to echo the political and legal concerns that have already been raised, including the constitutional implications of this bill.

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[English]

To start, it strikes me as inappropriate to provide the same MMP for substances that have vastly different levels of potency and danger. It is exactly this type of situation that the Supreme Court of Canada has raised concerns about in recent cases in which it struck down MMPs. I refer the House to the Supreme Court of Canada case in *Regina v. Muir*, in which the court cited *R v. Lloyd* in stating that “mandatory minimum sentences that...apply to offences that can be committed in various ways, under a broad range of circumstances... are vulnerable to constitutional challenge.”

Although the bill targets the importation of powerful opiates like fentanyl and carfentanil that are lethal in very small quantities, the increased MMPs would also apply to other substances like cannabis. Hon. members will recall that the government has introduced Bill C-45 and Bill C-46 to address and introduce a new comprehensive regime so that we can keep cannabis out of the hands of our youth and vulnerable communities.

Although a highly regulated substance, cannabis simply does not share the devastating qualities of fentanyl for instance. Suffice it to say that such differences are material from a sentencing and charter perspective, so it does not make sense to treat these two substances in the same way.

That said, there is no doubt that the increasing prevalence of potent opioids in our communities has sparked a public health crisis in Canada.

The onslaught of this deadly epidemic in Canada is twofold. First, the overdose crisis has been driven by the emergence of these powerful illicit opioids on the black market, leading to an unprecedented number of deaths among illegal drug users. This unfortunate reality is exacerbated by vile and deceitful drug dealers who mix these incredibly cheap yet highly addictive and potent substances with other more expensive drugs, for instance heroin or cocaine, in an effort to maximize their profits. The relative ease with which these opioids can be produced further compounds these problems.

A secondary contributing factor has been the high levels of addiction to legal opioids across Canada. This trend has been caused in part by inappropriate prescribing practices and poor education on the risks associated with opioid use.

Unfortunately, once prescription renewals expire, many individuals turn to the black market to supply their addiction. The demand that emanates from legal opioid addiction helps fuel the demand for such substances on the black market.

To effectively respond to the opioid crisis in Canada both contributing factors must be addressed. This is partly why I have strong reservations about the approach proposed in Bill C-338. It proposes an unnecessary, costly, and likely ineffective approach to a complex drug problem. The bill is focused on increasing MMPs for offenders engaged in importing and exporting instead of focusing on the root causes of this epidemic.

Evidentiary support is simply lacking to suggest that increasing MMPs in the way proposed by the bill will reduce the influx of these lethal drugs into Canadian communities. In fact, research on the “war

on drugs” in the United States reveals that increased penalties do little to deter high-level drug traffickers from engaging in this lucrative criminal conduct, nor do they do anything to help those battling addictions. Health and criminal justice experts assert that addressing the demand side is critical to comprehensively responding to complex social problems like these.

The import and export offences targeted by Bill C-338 are already punishable by a maximum term of life in prison. In Canada, this is the highest penalty a judge can impose. In my personal experience as a drug prosecutor, our judges consistently use their discretion to impose stiff penalties if and when they are warranted. In fact, courts around the country are already treating fentanyl trafficking very seriously.

For example, in a recent decision this year, *Regina v. Fyfe*, the judge imposed a total sentence of five years' imprisonment on a low level first-time fentanyl trafficker. I would point out that this is two more years than the mandatory minimum jail sentence proposed by this private member's bill. In the decision, the court noted that an appropriate sentence for fentanyl trafficking must be more serious than other hard drugs, for example cocaine, given the substantial risks posed by this and similar opioids.

Moreover, appellate courts across the country are revisiting sentencing ranges for those who traffic in these dangerous substances, noting that previous ranges are “out of sync” with the dangers these substances pose to society. I offer and commend to the House the case of *Regina v. Smith*, decided by the British Columbia Court of Appeal in 2017.

I will pause to note that it is important that we reaffirm the fundamental principle of the independence of the judiciary as that imparts a high degree of confidence among the public that the judiciary will do their job.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Let me be clear. We are talking about an unprecedented number of fatal drug overdoses in Canada. Our government fully understands the gravity of the situation, and we continue to take action to address the problem. The policies put in place to deal with this crisis need to be guided by performance measurement standards and evidence. These policies must have an immediate impact in order to reduce the number of tragic deaths.

That is why I am so pleased that our government has introduced a new Canadian drug and substances strategy. The strategy focuses on prevention, treatment, and enforcement, but it also reinstates harm reduction as a core pillar of Canada's drug policy. The strategy champions a comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and evidence-based approach to drug policy.

[English]

To further advance this strategy, the Minister of Health introduced Bill C-37, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related amendments under other acts. Together, these will address the serious and pressing public health issues related to opioids. That bill has now received royal assent, which is something all members in the House should celebrate.

This legislative response is one important part of our government's comprehensive approach to drug policy in Canada. Bill C-37 will simplify and streamline the application process for supervised consumption sites, clamp down on illegal pill presses, and extend the authority of border officers to inspect suspicious small packages coming into Canada, which is precisely the object of what this private member's bill tries to address.

In relation to this last point, extending the inspection powers of the CBSA officers is important, because one standard-sized envelope can contain 30 grams of fentanyl, potent enough to cause 15,000 overdoses. These numbers will increase exponentially where the substance in question is carfentanil.

In addition, our government is also investing over \$100 million to support the new Canadian drugs and substances strategy. This is in addition to \$10 million in emergency support that the federal government has provided to the province of British Columbia to assist in responding to the overwhelming number of overdoses.

While the private member's bill is well intentioned, its objectives will not be accomplished through the provisions set out in it. This is for all the reasons I have stated in my remarks. I therefore encourage all members to vote this private member's bill down and continue to support all the good work our government is doing with regard to controlled substances.

● (1800)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and speak in favour of the private member's bill put forward by my colleague, the member for Markham—Unionville. I want to thank the other members who have risen in the House today to speak on this important piece of legislation to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act in order to increase sentences for offences related to the importing and exporting of controlled drugs and substances.

I want to be very clear. We have an opioid crisis. It is plaguing our communities. As legislators, we must take some sort of action. We heard from some of my colleagues earlier today on Bill C-37, which would give our border services agents additional tools to address things like illegal pill presses and to search small packages. Those are all steps to address what I think all of us in this House would agree is a plague that is impacting communities across the country.

Bill C-338 is another step for us as parliamentarians to give our law enforcement officers, as well as the judicial system, the tools they need to fight this opioid crisis that is unfortunately taking away our friends, neighbours, and, in some cases, our family.

I want to talk a little about what is going on in my home province of Alberta. My riding is almost completely rural. We have never seen something like this affect the communities in my riding for as long as most of us have been there. For example, in 2016 there were 338 accidental opioid deaths, and the 2017 numbers are predicted to be much worse.

I have a first nations community in my riding, the Kainai Blood first nation, which had to declare a state of emergency in 2016 because of the number of deaths they were facing in their community. Many of those were young people. About 80% of the

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deaths in Alberta were people 20 to 35 years old. These were young people who had their entire lives ahead of them.

We have to understand that we have to get away from that stereotype that these are somehow down-and-out people or those who have long-term drug addiction problems. Some of them may, but what is most frightening to me and to many of my colleagues in this House is that a large number of those who have died from these opioid overdoses were trying opioids for the first time, or had taken something else that unknown to them was laced with fentanyl or carfentanil.

My colleague across the floor was talking about trying to take marijuana out of the hands of children and out of the black market. Unfortunately, many of these deaths are from people smoking marijuana that has been laced with some of these very dangerous opioid products. It is disingenuous to say that the legislation brought forward by the Liberal government is going to take marijuana out of the hands of children. That is what concerns me on the approach to fentanyl.

If people are allowed to have four plants, three feet high, in their house, how is it possibly going to make it less accessible to children? For example, in Ontario the provincial Wynne government is saying it is going to look at the LCBO as the avenue or vehicle to sell marijuana. The odds of the LCBO selling marijuana at a cheaper price than what is available on the street is probably slim to none.

We have to take stronger action to address some of these issues. What is attractive in Bill C-338 is that it takes a hard line on those who are importing and exporting fentanyl and carfentanil and these other very harmful opioids. These products are flooding our communities. I would attest that there is not a community, not a constituency, not a riding anywhere in Canada that is immune to this opioid crisis.

I think those of us who are in western Canada, in B.C. and Alberta, felt it a little sooner than maybe the rest of the Canadian provinces and territories. It is certainly making its way across Canada. There are massive numbers of these fentanyl and carfentanil pills. I know some of it is from prescriptions, from pharmacy patients who are distributing or reselling these products, but the vast majority of it is being imported from out of the country. A lot of it is from China.

● (1805)

We have to take some very strong steps as parliamentarians to ensure that those who import these products face some very harsh punishment, as well as those who export them, even though we do not have as much control over that aspect of it.

I have been to far too many funerals over the last two or three years for young people who have overdosed on fentanyl. The last one I was at was for a young man who was 26 years old. I had known him for most of his life. I coached him in hockey. I certainly never expected something like that to happen. This is a life that was taken much too soon. I know the bill does not address some of the consequences of fentanyl and opioid abuse, but it certainly addresses some of the root causes of it. I am not saying we cannot focus on funding for mental health. That is a key part of this issue as well.

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Certainly access to counselling, access to addictions counselling and recovery, those things are also very critical. I hope we have those discussions in Parliament moving forward. However, a big part of this is also on the justice side. What tools can we as parliamentarians give to our law enforcement and justice to ensure they can take hard action against people who import these products and then sell them in our neighbourhoods, schoolyards, and in communities across the country.

That is why as Conservatives we have taken such a hard stance on ensuring we have safe communities, mandatory sentencing, being tough on crime. As Canadians, we want to ensure we have safe communities, safe streets. I want to feel comfortable that my children are safe in my community. That is why it is so critical to do everything we can to stop the illegal importation of these drugs, methamphetamines, ecstasy, fentanyl. Again, we must provide our health services with the tools they need for mental health, resources on counselling, but we must ensure that those who import and sell these drugs face the harshest of punishments. They must be severely held accountable when they import these types of products.

I want to emphasize the fact that Bill C-338 does not talk about substance misuse. I do not want our friends across the floor to think we are not focusing on the consequences of drug addiction. That was a large issue with Bill C-37, which we talked about in the last session. We are talking about people who are bringing in these illegal substances into our country and making them available for sale and distribution in our communities. I recognize the importance of mental health services, but it is also to ensure we have the tools in place so those who import and sell these drugs face the most severe consequences.

The bill from my colleague from Ontario is one step, one tool in taking action against drug dealers.

We are facing an emergency. Drugs do not discriminate. It does not matter what age, gender, or how much money people make. These drugs are dangerous and unfortunately for many of us in the House we have seen they can kill our friends, neighbours, or loved ones.

It is important as parliamentarians that we take action. Canadians are looking to us to take strong action on the opioid crisis. I believe Bill C-338 brought forward by my colleague from Markham—Unionville is a key part of that strategy. It is one tool we can take to ensure our communities and our families are safe.

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Accordingly I invite the hon. member for Markham—Unionville for his right of reply. The hon. member has up to five minutes for his comments.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to address a serious issue that is causing thousands of deaths in Canada each year. The importing and exporting of dangerous drugs and substances is a serious threat to Canadians. More must be done.

I introduced Bill C-338, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act with regard to punishment in order to increase sentences for offences related to the importing and exporting of controlled drugs and substances. Bill C-338 indicates that if the

subject matter of the offence is less than one kilogram of a substance included in Schedule I or in Schedule II, he or she is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for life, with a minimum sentence of two years. It also indicates that if the subject matter of the offence is a substance included in Schedule I and is in an amount that is more than one kilogram, the person is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for life, with a minimum punishment of three years.

The current sentence is too light. This is unacceptable. It does not deter drug traffickers from continuing to import, export, and profit at the expense of society's most vulnerable. The reality is that criminals who import and export deadly drugs and substances are responsible for thousands of lost lives.

Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. Canadians are especially concerned about crime, which is why the former Conservative government introduced and passed over 30 measures aimed at strengthening our justice system, standing up for victims, and keeping our streets safe. Canadians lose faith in the criminal justice system when they feel that the punishment does not fit the crime. We make no apologies for strengthening penalties for drug trafficking or other crimes. We must ensure that sentencing still reflects the desire of Canadians to get tough on drug dealers and other criminals.

We are in the grips of a deadly fentanyl epidemic. In Ontario, about two people a day die due to opioid overdoses, and most involve fentanyl. A few months ago, the former health minister claimed that Canada needed more data on the opioid overdose crisis. I was shocked. The reality is that fentanyl is on our streets and people are dying. We do not need more research; we need action now. Bill C-338 will do that.

In 2016, opioids claimed the lives of at least 2,458 Canadians, according to a new estimate released by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Light sentences make it appealing for drug dealers to produce illegal substances in basements, labs, and kitchens. These dangerous drugs are produced in such conditions that it is impossible to predict the strength of each dose. In my riding of Markham—Unionville, a drug lab was discovered in the heart of an upper-middle-class residential neighbourhood. This forced residents to evacuate their homes. From coast to coast to coast, no community in any member's riding is immune to this epidemic. I truly understand the need for robust prevention and treatment options for addicts, but we cannot rehabilitate dead bodies.

As it stands, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act provides inadequate and unintimidating punishment for criminals who import and export lethal drugs and substances. Those who import and export these drugs and substances must be brought to justice and must face increased mandatory minimum sentences. Our constituents expect us to do more to keep our children and communities safe.

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• (1815)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Wednesday, September 27, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise this evening in adjournment proceedings to address a question I asked on April 5. I am extremely pleased that this question is still on the Order Paper because the matter has never been more timely. Since Bill C-38, Canada has been labouring under a broken environmental assessment process.

The day I rose to ask the question was the day the landmark report from the expert panel, convened by the hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change, was reported back. My question for the Prime Minister at that time said that the expert panel, “makes a bold recommendation: get rid of the NEB's Environmental Assessment Agency, have a single authority, give it quasi-judicial powers.” I then asked the Prime Minister when we could see this recommendation legislated. Unfortunately, that question was asked in April, and April, May, and June passed without an answer to when we would see this legislated.

To my horror, right after the House rose for the summer, a discussion paper was put forward by the federal government that combined the four different tracks of consultation that had been going on: the expert panel on environmental assessments, the one I just mentioned; the expert panel on the National Energy Board; a statutory process under the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans looking at fixing the Fisheries Act; and the transport committee looking at the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This cluster of acts had been wrecked under the two omnibus budget bills of 2012, Bill C-38 in the spring and Bill C-45 in the fall.

The discussion paper put forward by the government, which was a mere 23 pages, made a hash of all of the recommendations and substantive efforts to improve those acts. Let me refer to what was discussed on environmental assessment. While the expert panel said that sustainability must be central to impact assessments, the word “sustainability” did not appear once in the discussion paper, suggesting how the Liberals plan to legislate to fulfill their campaign promises.

While the expert panel stated that the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission should not do environmental reviews, that there had been a lack of public trust in their work, and that there should be a single agency with quasi-judicial powers, in the discussion document we find that for energy, nuclear projects, and offshore oil and gas there will be joint assessments. I am horrified that the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission will still be engaged, and worse, the offshore petroleum boards will now get a new mandate to participate in environmental assessment, for which they are completely unprepared and incompetent.

The expert panel also said we must ensure that there be federal jurisdictional triggers whenever a project was on federal land and involved federal money or where the federal government was a proponent; in other words, those things that were originally found back in the guideline orders in the 1970s. The first federal environmental assessment was in a guideline order put forward by cabinet. It was then replaced with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, brought forward under the Mulroney government and brought into law under Chrétien. This scheme of laws was substantively and substantially amended over the years to further improve the process, to avoid duplicative processes, to have joint processes, to ensure that there was one project, one review, and so on. All of that was trashed by Bill C-38 in 2012.

To my horror now, as I stand before this House, if the discussion document is what is legislated, the chief recommendations of the expert panel will be trashed, ignored, and we will not see the restoration of environmental assessment as it existed in 2006.

• (1820)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the question by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, a person I have enormous respect for, regarding the review of environmental assessment processes.

In 2015, Canadians sent a clear message that they had lost trust in our country's environmental assessment processes, which had been undermined by the significant changes made by the Harper government in 2012.

We pledged that if elected, a Liberal government would work to earn back the trust by reforming and modernizing Canada's environmental assessment system. Getting it right is crucial to both our environmental sustainability and our economic prosperity.

That is what our government is doing. As a first step to restore that trust, in January 2016, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change announced an interim approach and principles that took immediate effect for all major resource projects under review.

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These principles affirmed our government's commitment to assess direct upstream greenhouse gas emissions, to seek out and consider the views of the public and affected communities, to affirm that no current project would return to the starting line, to base decisions on science, traditional knowledge, and other relevant evidence to meaningfully consult indigenous peoples and, where appropriate, accommodate the impact on their rights.

In June of last year, our government took another step to deliver on its commitment to restore confidence in Canada's environmental and regulatory processes with the launch of a comprehensive review in order to rebuild trust in environmental assessment processes, modernize the National Energy Board, restore lost protections, and introduce modern safeguards to the Fisheries Act and the Navigation Protection Act.

Now, after more than a year of extensive consultations, our government is putting pen to paper on new legislation, and by early next year, our government will move to enact sweeping changes.

With respect to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, this comes as a result of a series of consultation sessions across the country, a report of an expert panel that the member notes in her question, and over 500 formal written submissions and thousands of online comments from Canadians.

In June, our government summarized what we had heard in a discussion paper entitled "Environmental and Regulatory Reviews", which can be found online. At the core of the proposed new direction is a shift from environmental assessment to impact assessment. This is an important change. It represents a move toward a more holistic approach that considers cultural, social, health, and economic considerations in addition to environmental impacts.

We have seen what has not worked in the past. It is clear that open and inclusive processes build better outcomes, early engagement can enhance project planning, and a predictable, timely process is key. Indigenous peoples have also been engaged on an ongoing basis since the review was launched, and we will continue to work with indigenous peoples as we consider options for legislative, regulatory, and policy changes.

In closing, Canadians want to know they can trust their environmental processes, and that is exactly what our government is working to deliver.

● (1825)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, but when he says to us that the discussion document released in late June "summarized what we had heard", I think there is something wrong with the Liberals' hearing. The expert panel said loud and clear said the National Energy Board should have nothing to do with environmental assessments. So too did the expert panel on the National Energy Board.

The environmental assessment expert panel, chaired by our former commissioner for environment and sustainable development, was very clear that sustainability should be central, and was very clear we need to go beyond a project list that limits when environmental reviews take place to look at federal jurisdiction overall. None of

these recommendations, broadly supported by tens of thousands of Canadians, made it into the discussion document.

Please, scrap the discussion document, and go back to the expert panel.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that our goal is to provide regulatory certainty to business, respect the rights of indigenous peoples, engage communities, and protect our environment for generations to come. We know the environment and the economy must, and do, go together.

We have a responsibility to be careful stewards of our resources, and we have an opportunity to create jobs and opportunities for Canadians. It is about building a system that is in the best interests of Canadians, a system that they can trust, and one where the environment and the economy work hand in hand. We are working toward that end.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to encourage the Liberal government to put its proclamations of alignment with working women and all women in the country, its avowed feminism. I am again urging the government to turn those good words into action that will result in meaningful differences in the lives of women every day.

For example, the government has continued to fail to table pay equity legislation in this House despite an all-party committee calling for that legislation to have been tabled four months ago. The government says it will probably get to it around the time of the next federal election.

As of tomorrow, we hit a serious milestone. As of tomorrow, women in Canada will be effectively working for free for the rest of the year. Even in 2017, women continue to be paid 74¢ on the dollar that Canadian men earn. If that gap were spread over an entire calendar year, then beginning tomorrow—Friday, September 22—women would go the rest of the year without any pay. That would be worse for a woman of colour. It would be an even earlier date in the year for a woman with disabilities. Indigenous women have been effectively working for free in our country since June 4.

Surely a government that actually wants to stand for gender equality would have already made legislative action using the power of its majority and of this Parliament to make real change that would make a difference in the lives of women and their families.

It has been 13 years since the pay equity task force presented a final report to this Parliament, with which the Liberal government of the day agreed. The pay equity task force recommendations continue to be something broadly supported by feminist, labour, and social justice organizations. At the committee that the parliamentary secretary and I both sit on, the status of women committee, we have been hearing witness after witness saying that pay equity is at the foundation of economic justice for women in Canada.

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My staff have done the math on this, bless them, and are following the United Nations campaign #stoptherobbery. They calculate that if pay equity legislation had been brought in place in 2004, when it was recommended, women in Canada would have had \$655 billion more in their pockets.

Once again, I ask this. Why is the government not putting its feminist rhetoric into action by legislating pay equity for women in Canada?

● (1830)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith back to Parliament. I am pleased, as always, to respond to her question.

As the hon. member knows, the Minister of Status of Women has emphasized many times that our government has made gender equality a priority, and we are turning this commitment into action.

Budget 2017 included a tremendous step forward with respect to openness and transparency on gender issues. For the first time ever, it included a groundbreaking gender statement, not as an annex but as a full chapter in the budget itself. This gender statement raises the bar in our understanding of how public policies affect men and women differently. We intend to build on this achievement in future budgets.

I also want to highlight some of the very important initiatives contained in budget 2017. It included a commitment of \$100.9 million over five years and \$20.7 million per year ongoing, for “It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence”, the first strategy of its kind.

Over the next 11 years, our government has also committed to investing \$7 billion in early learning and child care, and over \$11.2 billion in a national housing strategy. In particular, these investments will support access to child care and allow greater participation in work, education, and training, particularly for mothers.

Budget 2017 announced a new employment insurance caregiving benefit that would allow more caregivers, the majority of whom are women, to balance their work and family responsibilities. Our government will also create more flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, including flexible start and finish times, the ability to work from home, and new unpaid leaves to help manage family responsibilities.

Not only has our government stood by our promises in budget 2017, we continue to work very hard on issues such as pay equity. This view was clearly reflected in our government’s response on October 5, 2016, to the report of the special committee on pay equity, on which I believe the hon. member sat. In its response, our government stated that it strongly believed in the principle of equal pay for equal value.

Additionally, we believe in fair treatment of all workers, regardless of gender, and commit to developing proactive pay equity reform in the federal jurisdiction. We have made a commitment to introduce pay equity legislation in 2018.

I am proud of all these actions taken by our government that support the needs of women and their families, move us closer to

gender equality, and strengthen the middle class from coast to coast to coast.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, if the government really were committed to pay equity, successive Liberal and Conservative governments would not have fought Canada Post employees in court for 30 years in their challenge to try to get pay equity. The government would have, in this Parliament, acceded to the special committee’s request that this legislation be tabled four months ago. We are now being asked to wait a few more years.

Making promises, making budget announcements, and making commitments do nothing for the lives of women right now to get out of poverty. They so often live and retire in poverty. We need action now.

We have a long list of recommendations: change employment insurance to accommodate part-time and precarious work; introduce, now, domestic violence leave provisions so women do not need to lose their jobs if they need to take their families to safety; implement and pay for new child care spaces this year, which this budget did not do; and pay equity, now. There are so many things the government could do that would make a difference this year and would put more money in the pockets of women. We would all end up better.

I am dismayed that the Liberals continue to be all talk and no action.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, our government continues to champion initiatives that advance gender equality in our country. Budget 2017 included a tremendous leap forward in terms of openness and transparency on gender issues, and we have made strong movement toward our commitment to introduce pay equity legislation by 2018.

Even prior to the budget, we committed to a national poverty reduction strategy; continued to enhance the use of gender-based analysis to ensure decisions about policies, programs, and legislation to advance gender equality; introduced the new Canada child benefit; and worked to ensure greater diversity for some 4,000 Governor in Council and ministerial appointments. I could go on and on.

We will be doing much more, including introducing pay equity legislation in 2018.

● (1835)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last April, when I asked the government if it would return to the bargaining table with our Canada Border Services Agency officers, I had hoped we would see an end to the disrespect being shown to these brave and hard-working officers. They have not had a collective agreement in place for over 1,100 days. This is clearly not acceptable.

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At a time when global events mean more asylum seekers than ever are crossing our borders, it is our border security officers, or BSOs, who are there providing assistance, support, and even hope to those trying to escape oppressive regimes. At a time when organized crime is attempting to smuggle drugs and arms into Canada, our border security officers are truly the thin blue line protecting our nation.

These are not border guards. They carry firearms and they enforce laws. They are law enforcement officers, and they deserve to be recognized as such in their collective agreement and to be treated with respect.

This is at the heart of the dispute. The previous Conservative government showed little respect for border services officers and their collective agreement. To date, it appears that the Liberals feel the same way.

One of my constituents in Kootenay—Columbia recently wrote to you, Mr. Speaker, on September 15, stating that he and his BSO colleagues have gone three years without a contract and that they are being denied wage and pension parity with other federal law enforcement agencies. In his letter he wrote:

Given the nature and scope of our key duties, responsibilities, and the risks we face, it seems unconscionable that the current Canadian government continues to offer BSOs fewer benefits and less respect than other Canadian law enforcement agencies.

Let us take a look at just how important these officers are.

According to the Canada Border Services Agency's 2015-16 departmental performance report, signed off personally by the current minister, officers welcomed over 93 million travellers to our country each year. They process over \$16 million in commercial shipments and they collect over \$30 billion in revenue. The cost to collect that \$30 billion is \$1.7 billion, a fraction of what they brought into our federal revenue stream.

I would like to quote the minister from his written message in that performance report. He wrote:

I can confidently say that the dedicated men and women of the CBSA are meeting their responsibilities with excellence, day in and day out.

I agree. These officers are absolutely meeting their responsibilities with excellence. Unfortunately, the government is not. It is steadfastly refusing to negotiate a new contract. It is not surprising, then, that in a recent federal job survey, the CBSA ranked dead last in employee satisfaction, ranking 58th out of 58 public servant agencies surveyed. It is struggling with attracting new recruits and keeping its current officers at a time when we need strength and numbers to keep us safe.

We are fast approaching a crisis in law enforcement generally in Canada. To quote again from the letter sent to you, Mr. Speaker, by one of my BSOs:

It is further hoped that that current Liberal Government will engage in good faith bargaining and rightly recognize that the CBSA, along with its hard working employees, are indeed legitimate Law Enforcement Officers employed by a legitimate Law Enforcement Agency. All told, we are only seeking what a reasonable person would consider fair and just, and trust that the Liberal Government will come to the same conclusion.

Will the government come to that conclusion? If so, I look forward to hearing that from my colleagues across the floor.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to address the view expressed by my hon. colleague that the government has been unfair in its contract negotiations with Canada's border guards.

Border services officers and other peace officers in Canada have our government's utmost respect for the work they do and the service they provide to Canadians every day.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

I understand his concerns about these public servants. Members will no doubt recall that, shortly after the current government took office, the President of the Treasury Board contacted public service unions and promised to bargain fairly with them. We never reneged on that commitment. As result, we have reached 19 agreements with the bargaining agents that represent over 95% of public servants employed by Treasury Board.

[*English*]

This is strong proof of our commitment to negotiate in good faith and reach agreements that are fair and balanced. In December 2016, we concluded our first of four tentative agreements with the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada. Since then we have reached 15 more agreements with a number of other bargaining agents, including settlements with four of the five bargaining groups in the core public administration represented by the Public Service Alliance of Canada. This is the very same union that represents the border guards.

[*Translation*]

We are determined to reach agreements with the other bargaining units by negotiating respectfully and in good faith. As an expression of our good faith, the government has also introduced a number of initiatives to repeal laws that were seen as anti-union.

[*English*]

We have already repealed two laws, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, related to the financial disclosure processes of unions and their certification. These bills were repealed as they had not been formulated in accordance with the principles of consultation. Furthermore, we introduced legislation, Bill C-5, to repeal the controversial legislation that gave the government the authority to unilaterally override the collective bargaining process and impose a new sick leave system; and again, on November 28, the government introduced another piece of legislation, Bill C-34, to repeal changes made to the Public Service Labour Relations Act in 2013.

[*Translation*]

These changes gave the employer the unilateral right to designate essential services and took away the unions' right to resort to third party dispute resolution. We have a solid track record when it comes to bargaining in good faith, which clearly shows our desire to achieve responsible outcomes for all parties.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

With respect to the border services bargaining unit of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, we were disappointed that we were not able to reach agreements through mediated negotiations, but we do remain open to continuing negotiations and to reaching an agreement that is fair and reasonable for these very important employees of Canada and Canadians.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, first, they are not border guards. They are law enforcement officers doing very important work on our behalf, both keeping drugs and guns out of our country and working with quite a large increase in the number of asylum seekers coming into Canada. It is 1,100 days-plus now that they have been without a contract, and from the list that the hon. member presented, they can reach an agreement. Therefore, I would really encourage them to sit down and bargain in good faith with the border services officers and try to reach agreement on a contract. I cannot imagine how hard it must be for all of them, with the uncertainty they face. They are having trouble recruiting new members. They are having trouble keeping members. Please do sit down with them, bargain in good faith, and get a new contract.

I must say that I am quite concerned about law enforcement generally in Canada. We saw the yellow stripe campaign by the RCMP. The people who keep us safe at the House are also still

looking for a reasonable settlement to their contract. There really is a crisis in law enforcement right now across Canada.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the work and commitment of my colleague across the aisle, particularly on behalf of the environment and the border services officers. Every day, our border services officers serve Canadians by facilitating the travel of people and trade to and from Canada, while protecting the integrity of the border. It is not an easy job.

● (1845)

[Translation]

The government recognizes and appreciates the invaluable work that they do for Canadians. As part of the current negotiations, the border services bargaining unit has said that we are at an impasse and is now seeking to reach an agreement through conciliation.

[English]

I am optimistic that there will be a conclusion that is acceptable to all parties in the near future.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.)

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