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Friday, October 6, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, October 6, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

FEDERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.) moved that Bill C-57, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to speak about Bill C-57, an act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act. This is an important step toward realizing our government's vision that Canada be one of the greenest countries in the world and that our quality of life continue to improve.

[*Translation*]

I am proud today to speak about C-57, an act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act. This is an important step toward fulfilling our government's vision of making Canada one of the greenest countries in the world and ensuring that our quality of life continues to improve.

[*English*]

As I will explain, the amendments in the bill clearly show that sustainable development and the environment are at the forefront of our thinking and that our government's decision-making going forward will reflect this. I will discuss how these amendments would increase transparency and enable a whole-of-government approach to sustainable development, building on the current act and its implementation.

I will talk about the contributions of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development and how the amendments would respond to them. Finally, I will describe how the bill would support an ongoing conversation with indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and all Canadians about sustainability and the environment.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge all the people who have helped to lay the foundation for the bill. First, I want to thank the chair and the members of the Standing Committee on

Environment and Sustainable Development, as well as the witnesses who appeared before them during the committee's recent review of the Federal Sustainable Development Act. The committee's second unanimous report, "Federal Sustainability for Future Generations", provided insights and recommendations that were instrumental in shaping the amendments.

I want to thank the hon. John Godfrey for bringing forward the original private member's bill that became the FSDA, establishing the foundation for a federal sustainable development strategy. I also want to thank my colleague and parliamentary secretary, the member for North Vancouver. His hard work and his leadership have helped us move beyond commitment and aspiration to the bill before us today.

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is at the heart of our government's agenda and priorities. Since the very beginning, we have consistently said that a healthy environment and a strong economy can and must go hand in hand.

[*English*]

The act also promotes integrated, coordinated action across government by requiring 26 departments and agencies to prepare their own sustainable development strategies that comply with and contribute to the federal strategy.

[*Translation*]

The federal sustainable development strategy that I presented a year ago today has shown what can be accomplished within the act's framework. It is bolder than previous strategies because it proposes 13 ambitious, long-term objectives that support the environmentally based sustainable development goals of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. It responds directly to the interests and priorities of Canadians. We are listening to them. We held over four months of consultations with the public and stakeholders, and we share Canadians' priorities, whether we are talking about the fight against climate change, healthy ecosystems, clean drinking water, or food security.

Government Orders

By going above and beyond what the law requires, we included more federal departments and agencies in our strategy than ever before. In response to a recommendation of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to take a whole-of-government approach, 15 organizations are voluntarily contributing to the 2016-2019 federal sustainable development strategy, on top of the 26 organizations that are already legally required to participate. That means a total of 41 federal departments and agencies have a role to play in making our vision for sustainable development a reality. That is eight more than in the 2013-2016 federal sustainable development strategy for Canada.

[English]

Building on the act's commitment to transparency and accountability, we have also committed to updating our strategy on an ongoing basis to ensure that Canadians and parliamentarians can closely track our accomplishments and results. We have acted on this commitment, publishing the first update to our strategy in June. That update shows that we have already achieved a number of the short-term milestones set out in our strategy, such as ratifying the historic Paris Agreement.

Now, just this week, we are tabling more than 20 departmental sustainable development strategies for organizations across the federal government. These strategies set out concrete commitments that will help us deliver on the goals and targets of the federal sustainable development strategy. By adding this substance and detail to our plan, the strategies will ensure that Canadians have a clear picture of what our government is doing to advance sustainable development in Canada.

We have accomplished a lot, but we are committed to doing more toward implementing a renewed federal sustainability approach built on accountability, inclusiveness, and an ongoing dialogue with indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and all Canadians. Bill C-57 reflects this renewed approach. It would raise the bar for transparency and reporting; create a truly whole-of-government system of sustainable development planning, reporting, and action; and ensure that sustainable development strategies are inclusive and support our commitment to future generations.

Transparency and accountability to Parliament are at the core of the current FSDA. They were key issues for the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development as it conducted a review of the act, and they are central to the amendments set out in this bill.

[Translation]

Parliamentarians have always played an essential oversight role with respect to how the government keeps its promises and delivers sustainable development results. This bill will augment and strengthen their role by requiring every department and organization to submit, to parliamentary committees, an annual report on progress toward meeting sustainable development targets.

It will also ensure that sustainable development strategies include firm targets so parliamentarians and Canadians can hold the government to account. Building on the existing act, the proposed amendments in this bill will make it clear that federal sustainable

development strategy targets must be measurable and have set deadlines.

• (1010)

[English]

Sustainable development cannot be limited to one department or agency. Organizations across the federal government play a role in protecting and restoring Canada's environment and in improving Canadians' quality of life. As I have said, we have already increased the number of participating departments far beyond the 26 that are named in the act. These amendments would take us further, expanding our whole-of-government approach to more than 90 departments and agencies. These would include organizations with a significant environmental footprint, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. So we can maintain the whole-of-government approach even when circumstances change, the bill would enable the government to add or remove organizations from the act.

All these amendments would align with our commitment to openness and transparency and to leading by example. Amendments that require strong sustainability targets and accountability for results would also support our commitment to future generations to address climate change, develop our natural resources responsibly, develop the clean-growth economy, and modernize environmental assessment and regulatory processes.

Now I would like to discuss the work and recommendations of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development that have contributed to the amendments in Bill C-57.

[Translation]

Acting on our strength of conviction, we have taken truly meaningful steps, such as ratifying the Paris agreement, working with the provinces, territories, and indigenous peoples to develop the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, and making new investments in clean technology and green infrastructure.

We have also pledged our support to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, the global anti-poverty framework that leaves no one behind. The 2030 agenda's 17 universal goals signal a renewed global desire to make sustainable development a reality, and we want Canada to play a leading role in that movement.

[English]

I have already mentioned the invaluable contributions the committee made through its review of the FSDA last year in its report, "Federal Sustainability for Future Generations". In that report, the committee stressed that the amendments to the act must begin with its purpose. I agree. Bill C-57 includes a revised purpose for the act, shifting the focus of our sustainable development strategy from short-term planning to long-term vision. It places the focus on inspiring economic, social, and environmental advancement toward a better future.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

The committee suggested that the government review the use of principles in the FSDA, and Bill C-57 will add new, generally accepted sustainability principles to the act. Two basic principles are already set out in the act: the precautionary principle, which states that if there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation, and the basic principle that sustainable development is based on an ecologically efficient use of natural, social, and economic resources.

These are essential principles, but other principles are also needed to provide departments and agencies, and the ministers themselves, a clear direction when preparing sustainable development strategies and measures. Bill C-57 will incorporate seven new sustainability principles, including intergenerational equity, a polluter-pays approach, and the internalization of costs. The committee highlighted the need to involve key organizations in promoting sustainable development within the government, and that is what we have done.

[English]

In 2016 we established the Centre for Greening Government within the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. The centre's role is to track federal greenhouse gas emissions centrally, coordinate efforts across government, and drive results. Through the centre, the Treasury Board Secretariat has taken on an instrumental role in advancing our commitment to reduce federal greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030. The amendments to this bill would build on this, formalizing the Treasury Board's role in developing policies related to reducing the government's environmental footprint and ensuring that departments and agencies take these policies into account in preparing their sustainable development strategies.

Again, let me commend and thank the chair and members of the standing committee for their efforts in reviewing the Federal Sustainable Development Act and formulating their recommendations. This is how Parliament should work. The standing committee has tabled a thoughtful and unanimous report, and our government is responding with concrete changes. I want to thank all the members.

- (1015)

[Translation]

With the 2016-2019 federal sustainable development strategy, we have completed the first step in implementing the committee's report. Our strategy responded to its recommendations with more ambitious and measurable targets and a clear commitment with regard to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the core principles of sustainable development. Bill C-57 is the next step. The committee underscored the need to amend the legislation. We listened. This bill makes the necessary legislative changes to support a more inclusive, responsible, and integrated approach to federal sustainability. I want to emphasize how much I appreciate the efforts of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and I hope this excellent collaboration continues.

[English]

I would like to go on now to discuss how we are engaging indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and Canadians on sustainable development.

As we acknowledged in our strategy, our government cannot achieve sustainable development alone. It requires action across Canadian society: by provinces, by territories and communities, by indigenous governments and organizations, and by business and civil society. In fact, as our strategy makes clear, all Canadians have a role to play in building a more sustainable Canada.

The FSDA recognizes the need for an inclusive approach by requiring the government to consult with the public and stakeholders on each new federal sustainable development strategy.

It also establishes the Sustainable Development Advisory Council, which I chair, and which includes representatives of each province and territory, indigenous peoples, business, environmental non-governmental organizations, and labour. The input that Canadians provided through public consultations, including advice from the council, shaped our current strategy. Their comments showed that Canadians are passionate, engaged, and informed about sustainable development and the environment. Between February and June 2016, we received hundreds of comments on the strategy from people and organizations from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

Canadians have sent us a clear message that they support the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and they want us to take bold action on climate change. They have told us that they want mandatory and ambitious sustainable development objectives, clear and measurable targets, as well as concrete action plans. They also told us that our government's strategy should be a call-to-action that shows what every Canadian can do for the environment and sustainability.

As I explained, the strategy I tabled last October includes a response to the priorities expressed by Canadians as well as the international community. For instance, for the first time, the federal sustainable development strategy includes a target for sustainable food, something that has been neglected thus far, according to Canadians. Our strategy also includes information on things that every Canadian can do to help us achieve our sustainable development goals.

We are also committed to continuing the dialogue with our partners, stakeholders, and all Canadians as we roll out our strategy, which goes above and beyond the requirements of the act regarding consultation.

[English]

Indigenous peoples, communities, provinces, territories, and Canadians expect to be heard when it comes to the economy and the environment. Since tabling our strategy, we have maintained an ongoing conversation with Canadians to let them know what the government is doing, and to learn about their own actions to support sustainable development.

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We will continue to engage with them on how we can use a strengthened FSDA to ensure that Canada is a sustainability leader. We want to hear from Canadians about how we can address climate change, support and promote innovative technologies, strengthen our economy, and create good-paying jobs for Canadians in the clean-growth century.

The amendments in Bill C-57 will support engagement by strengthening the Sustainable Development Advisory Council. The council brings together passionate, knowledgeable people from all sectors of Canadian society. It provided important input into our 2016-19 federal sustainable development strategy. For example, our ambitious target for clean water in first nations communities responds to the council's advice, along with comments from other organizations and Canadians.

With this bill, we have the opportunity to enhance the role of the Sustainable Development Advisory Council through legislative change. We recognize that the involvement in indigenous peoples in environmental and sustainable development policy is essential. These amendments would ensure that their voices are heard, by doubling the number of representatives of indigenous people sitting on the council from three to six.

In conclusion, the Federal Sustainable Development Act has had a positive impact on federal sustainability, helping us move towards transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and a whole-of-government approach. However, our government is determined to do more.

With the renewed approach to sustainable development that this bill represents, sustainable development strategies will be guided by sustainable development principles and a more ambitious purpose that combines transparency and accountability with the aspiration to advance sustainable development in Canada and improve Canadians' quality of life.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Guided by the sustainability reports, our renewed approach will reassert and reinforce the role of parliamentary committees through a new requirement for an annual report from departments and agencies on their contribution to achieving our sustainable development targets.

[*English*]

The work of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development has guided our approach, and the committee will play a key role going forward in holding the government accountable for results. This is the beginning of the next chapter in Canada's sustainability story. An amended act will provide the framework for action to fulfill our domestic and international sustainability commitments.

With the support of my colleagues, I am confident that we can achieve our vision of a clean environment, a sustainable economy, and a better quality of life for all Canadians.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the committee that generated the report that gave rise to these amendments to the Federal Sustainable Development Act. If we

listen to the minister's speech, it sounds all peaches and cream, like everything is rosy and that we have sunny ways.

In fact, this week the Auditor General, through the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development, released a report about the performance of this minister. Anyone who reads this report would consider it a scathing indictment of that minister's leadership on this file.

I will read two sections, the first is on page 15 of the first report. The commissioner said, "We concluded that Environment and Climate Change Canada", which is that minister's responsibility, "...did not make progress toward meeting Canada's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions." It does not say "did not make enough progress", it says "did not make progress".

The second report is also damning. It says, "We concluded that Environment and Climate Change Canada," which is that minister's responsibility, "...did not provide adequate leadership to advance the federal government's adaptation to climate change impacts." That is pretty damning.

Since the commissioner looked at the last two years, which is the two years in which this minister has had conduct of this file, how can she defend that performance when she looks at this report, and why has she not considered stepping down to make room for someone who can get it right?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the member opposite for his hard work as part of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. It was a unanimous report, and I certainly appreciate the efforts in that regard.

Unlike the previous government, though, our government recognizes that climate change is real and that we need to take action. Obviously there is more we can do, and we are committed to doing more. However, unlike the previous government, we have taken serious action. We are putting a price on pollution because we know that is a way to foster innovation and reduce emissions. We are phasing out coal because we know, not only are there serious health impacts, but that it is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. We have a net-zero building strategy because we know that the built environment contributes to our greenhouse gas emissions and that we can build buildings that are more efficient and that save people money. We are making investments in clean technology and innovation because we understand that growing our economy and building a more sustainable environment go together.

I certainly accept the recommendations in the report of the commissioner of the environment. We are doing more. We are working with provinces and territories. Unlike the previous government, we do not just talk about having targets, we actually have a plan to achieve them.

Government Orders

•(1025)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the concerns raised by my colleague on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. My particular concern, contrary to what the minister has attested to, is that as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, she is indeed moving forward on initiatives on climate change. What she has not properly reported is that many of the critical recommendations from the committee were not reflected in the bill before us now. In fact, these are very critical recommendations that also came from the commissioner, and, that is, it is not introducing a whole-of-government approach.

This bill still rests the responsibility for holding all the departments and agencies into account with an official buried within the Minister of Environment's department. That is contrary to what has been recommended for a whole-of-government approach, which is that the responsibility for the oversight should rest with an entity like the Privy Council or Treasury Board. Treasury Board is sort of watchdogging what is going on with climate change but, as we all know, the new United Nations' 17 criteria for sustainable development goes far beyond climate change.

As my colleague noted, the recent audit by the commissioner for sustainable development is finding over the decade and a half that, in fact, the departments and agencies are not observing the cabinet directive, and are not only providing faulty reports but they are not even providing reports, either to their minister or the cabinet. It was 80% percent of the departments and agencies audited that failed to deliver the assessment, and neither the Privy Council or Treasury Board are seeking assurances.

Can the minister speak to why she made a decision not to change the act as recommended by the committee?

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the hon. member for her hard work in this regard.

We believe we are making very important changes to the act that respond to the committee's report, such as making decision-making related to sustainable development more transparent and accountable to Parliament, promoting coordination across the Government of Canada to advance sustainable development, and respecting Canada's domestic and international obligations related to sustainable development. It really is a whole-of-government approach.

The bill extends the coverage in the Federal Sustainable Development Act, from 26 to more than 90 departments and agencies. These departments and agencies can be found in schedules I and II of the Financial Administration Act.

As well, the bill formalizes the role of the Treasury Board in leading efforts to green government operations and enabling the consistent application across government of policies affecting sustainability. It also incorporates an expanded suite of sustainable development principles.

In addition to the basic and precautionary principles that are already in the Federal Sustainable Development Act, the bill proposes to add the principles of intergenerational equity, polluter pays, internalization of costs, openness and transparency involving indigenous people, collaboration, and results delivery. All of these

principles are intended to guide the development of sustainable development strategies.

I am extremely proud of what we are putting forward. It also incorporates and recognizes that we need to be doing our part when it comes to sustainable development principles internationally. We have incorporated this approach. This will help guide the government in a more transparent way, to ensure that we are taking strong action to build a more sustainable economy and moving forward to a greener future.

•(1030)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the minister for bringing forth Bill C-57, an act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act. The minister is very well aware that the environment is a very important issue in Hamilton. It is a priority for Hamiltonians. I know the minister is aware of that, because she is a Hamilton girl and a Hamilton woman.

The latest meeting I had with members of a local environmental group was this past Friday, a week ago today. I know that they, as well as all Canadians, want to pass on to the minister how proud they are of the work she has done. When we look at the Paris accord and the consensus-building that she was able to attain there, as well as the price on carbon, we are all very proud of the leadership and the passion that this minister has demonstrated.

One of the questions that continuously comes up with constituents in my riding is that they want to be assured that sustainable development and the environment are at the forefront of the government's decision-making with respect to all issues that come forward. I know that this bill does that. However, I wonder if the minister could expand on how this bill would assist in ensuring Canadians that sustainable development and the environment are at the root of all decisions that are made by this government.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her leadership in the Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas region. It is important and critical to have members who are committed to a sustainable environment and strong economy. I was proud to be in Hamilton where we are working very hard at cleaning up the Hamilton harbour, the largest contaminated site on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes. We are making great progress, which will also lead to great economic benefits. People are coming to Hamilton to enjoy the harbour front. There is certainly a lot more that we want to continue to do with communities across the country, because we are all in this together. It is a huge economic opportunity.

The purpose of what we have brought forward today is to ensure that we are driving an approach to sustainable development and to greening our economy in a very transparent way, where Canadians can see the actions that our government is taking. We can assure that everything we are doing across government reflects this approach to sustainable development and growing a clean economy.

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Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to engage in this debate on amendments to the Federal Sustainable Development Act, Bill C-57. I believe Canadians understand that when governments make policy decisions, they should make those decisions through a lens that takes into account Canada's economic imperatives, our social imperatives, and our environmental imperatives.

The original act, as my colleague, the minister, mentioned, was passed a few parliaments ago, in 2008, under then environment minister John Baird. As members know, in majority governments, opposition private members' bills do not get passed unless they have the support of the government of the day. That is what happened here. Our government very quickly realized that sustainability had to be baked into everything the federal government did to ensure an appropriate balance between social, economic, and environmental factors within Canada. Therefore, we supported that act.

Upon further study at committee recently, of which I am a member, and was pleased to be part of the deliberations that gave rise to the report, and when we reflected on the act as it presently stood, it had a number of flaws that needed to be corrected. There was consensus at committee on the items that needed to be corrected. We were able to issue a consensus report, which is not always that common when there is a majority government that is fixated upon imposing its will on Parliament.

The act itself requires that all government decision-making is done with a view to future generations. I am glad my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, recognized the fact that the committee recommendations talked about the intergenerational nature of sustainability. Therefore, policy-making will be viewed through the lens of environmental, economic, and social factors to ensure that not only will today's generation have a lifestyle we can applaud, but is one that we can pass on to future generations to take up and build upon.

There are a couple of the things the proposed bill will do to amend the act. It will make more robust the provisions that require government agencies and departments to provide regular reports on their progress by ensuring they meet our sustainability goals. The number of departments and agencies has been significantly increased, those that fall under the act. They will be subject to a review of all policy-making through the lens of the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

Beyond that, there is an increase in the number of members of the advisory council that provides advice to the minister. There also are a number of items that we will likely bring forward amendments on at committee, for example, that the advisory council members be paid. Every time the Liberals come up with a new policy, or new legislation, or new regulation, they always increase the number of people who get paid. That costs the taxpayers money. As Conservatives, we can say, with absolute conviction, that we have always defended the interests of Canadian taxpayers. That is why we will bring forward amendments at committee.

We have had the Federal Sustainable Development Act in place since 2008, close to 10 years, and the Liberal federal government has been in place for two years. It has had the chance to understand the act and to apply it across all agencies and government to ensure our

sustainable development goals are met. Canadians have the right to ask this. What kind of progress has the government and the minister made?

• (1035)

It just so happens that this week, when we began debate on Bill C-57, the Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development issued what was effectively an audit report under the Auditor General of Canada, highlighting the performance of the government and the Environment Minister when it came to sustainability and the environment. This is a damning indictment of the Liberal government's performance, not only on the environment file but on sustainability writ large.

I will go to the first report, which addresses the progress that might have been made on reducing greenhouse gases. Remember, the Liberal government boasted in the last election that it was the only party that could address Canada's climate change challenges. The Liberals have had two years to work on it. One would imagine, with all the rhetoric we have heard from them and from the minister, that there would be significant progress made. What is the conclusion of the Auditor General? It is an F, a failing grade. She said:

We concluded that Environment and Climate Change Canada...the measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions contained in the framework had yet to be implemented.

It gets worse. She went on to say:

We concluded that Environment and Climate Change Canada...did not make progress toward meeting Canada's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

With all the rhetoric we heard during the last election and over the last two years, and the minister always talking about the environment and the economy going hand in hand, I would expect some progress would be made. However, the report says "no progress". It is not just that there was insufficient progress, or not enough progress. The commissioner said that no progress was made, which is pretty damning. In the meantime, the one thing the minister and her government did was impose a massive carbon tax on Canadians, which is sucking dry the pockets of Canadian taxpayers.

It gets worse. The second report, which was issued this past Tuesday, on page 27, states:

We concluded that Environment and Climate Change Canada...did not provide adequate leadership to advance the federal government's adaptation to climate change impacts.

It highlights a lack of federal leadership from the minister. It goes on to say that:

Most of the federal departments and agencies we examined did not take appropriate measures to adapt to climate change impacts...As a result, the federal government could not demonstrate that it was making progress in adapting to a changing climate. Stronger federal leadership is needed.

What a damning indictment of the Liberal government and the minister's performance on the environment file.

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I believe Canadians can draw the conclusion that the Liberal government cannot be trusted. It would not be an unfair conclusion to make. When we look at the government's record on other issues, it is very clear the government, which made so many promises during the election, has now become a monument to broken promises.

The last two years are littered with broken promises. For example, on deficits, members will remember the Prime Minister said that the Liberals would run a \$10 billion deficit. That was his word. Canadians took him at his word, and they elected him. Today we are looking at annual deficits of \$30 billion a year. It is a huge broken promise. These deficits will be run in order to spend, spend, spend, not on the priorities of taxpayers, but on the priorities of the Liberal government.

● (1040)

Remember electoral reform, the promise that it would be the last election under the first-past-the-post system? That is another broken promise, and what a fiasco that was. The minister lost her job as a result of that. Quite frankly, the buck should have stopped at the Prime Minister's desk. He was the one who initiated that failed process. He had promised Canadians he would consult broadly, that it would be a fair process, that he would divine some kind of a consensus out of the process and then move forward. Did that happen? No. It was a debacle. At the end of the day, the Prime Minister said that because he could not find consensus, he would break that promise of electoral reform. It is a disgrace.

Then there is the whole issue of taxes, taxes here, taxes there, such as a carbon tax and a payroll tax. The most recent debacle the government engaged in was to bring forward reforms that would impose a huge tax burden, not on the big fat cats, not on the rich people in Canada, but on small businesses. We are talking about mom and pop shops, the pizza owner in my community, who employs his family and maybe some other employees. They are working hard to scrape by, earning maybe \$50,000 to \$80,000 a year. The government has now determined they should be the target of tax increases. These are not tiny tax increases like the tiny deficits the Prime Minister promised in the last election. He proposes to tax small businesses across Canada at a rate of 73%. It is disgraceful.

The government will take the revenues from the savings of these businesses and tax them at 73%. I have talked to businesses in my community. I have held round tables on this business tax. The business people, the ones who have the small business operations, which are the backbone of our economy, are outraged that the government, the Prime Minister, and the Finance Minister would tax small businesses at a rate of up to 73%. However, the finance minister's billion dollar company, called Morneau Shepell, will not be impacted. It will pay lower taxes on half-a-billion dollars worth of income every year. This is one of Canada's largest companies.

The Prime Minister, who has benefited from a trust fund, a family inheritance, his investments, will not be impacted by the changes brought forward by the Minister of Finance. Again, this is a breach of trust.

The government wants us to trust it. When it talks about the federal sustainability act, it wants us to trust that it will get it done. It promised Canadians it would protect the environment. It promised Canadians that the economy and the environment would go hand in

hand. I remember the environment minister saying that time and time again. She said it again today, and we will probably hear it in question period.

What happened? Instead of understanding the economic component, the government has completely neglected our economy and the importance of small businesses across Canada. Ninety-eight per cent of all businesses across Canada are small businesses. They are the backbone of our economy. The Minister of Finance, aided and abetted by the environment minister, are attacking the very people who build and sustain our economy. Not only are they doing that, the government is proposing to introduce tax laws that will make it more difficult for farmers and owners of small businesses to transfer their businesses to the next generation. That is why it is ironic to hear the minister talk about how important it is to look at the intergenerational impacts of our policies.

● (1045)

If she is talking about the Federal Sustainable Development Act, which is supposed to marry the environment and the economy, why has her government completely forgotten about the economic component? It is unbelievable.

When we were elected, we predicted that the Prime Minister was making promises far beyond what he could deliver on. We knew that he was making promises that were raising the expectations of Canadians and that he would never meet those expectations. Guess what? We have been proven right. Day after day there is a new fiasco, a new scandal.

There is no transparency. Do members remember the mandate letters that the Prime Minister issued to every single one of his ministers, including the environment minister? I have read through that mandate letter many times, and I am thankful to the Prime Minister for giving us a glimpse of what he was hoping would happen here in Canada and here in this House. That mandate letter said that the Prime Minister wanted to set a higher bar for transparency and openness in government and wanted to set a higher bar for addressing conflicts of interest, such that not even a perceived conflict of interest would be acceptable to the Prime Minister.

However, we have seen that in attacking small Canadian businesses with his tax reforms, the Minister of Finance stands to benefit from changing tax laws. Forcing small Canadian companies to de-incorporate would force those business people to invest in private pension funds and to have their pension funds administered by none other than the finance minister's own company, Morneau Shepell. We will hear more about that later in question period. The conflict of interest is jaw-dropping and is in such conflict with the minister's mandate letter.

Government Orders

The same is true for the environment minister. Time and time again I have requested the environment minister to provide me with departmental assessments of the impact that her carbon tax will have on Canada, including on our small businesses and on families across this country. The Liberals hand us the information, but it is heavily redacted, which means censored. This is a government of censorship. It does not want the public to know any information about what happens behind closed doors. What we had from the minister was not a clear presentation of what the impacts will be on our economy; we received a heavily censored document that did not help us make any kind of sense out of the government's policies.

We do have one report. It is from the Conference Board of Canada, which came out with a report showing that the carbon tax that the Liberals have proposed will have a modest impact on greenhouse gas emissions. When I say "modest", I really mean a negligible impact. As well, the report says implementing the Liberal plan to address climate change is going to take trillions of dollars of investment.

The report goes even further. It says that under the Liberal plan, government expenditures will grow, and what will happen to the private sector? It says very clearly that the private sector will shrink.

As Conservatives, we have great confidence in the private sector. Small and medium-size businesses, as well as large businesses, all contribute to the prosperity we have in this country. This is a very credible report from the Conference Board of Canada, and it is shocking that it expects that the role of government is going to expand and that the role of the private sector is going to shrink.

I put a lot on the plate here. The government has a lot to answer for. We can do better, and if the Liberals cannot do it, they should step aside and let us do the job.

●(1050)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to questions and comments, I want to inform the hon. member that he will have about eight minutes after question period when this matter is taken up again.

Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to note that the member's intervention had all the drama of a Shakespearean tragedy, but we are here to debate legislation. It is Bill C-57, so I have a very simple question. Does the hon. member support the bill in the end?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that yes, we do, with amendments that we hope to present at committee.

However, the member talked about a Shakespearean tragedy. The current government's performance on the environment and on sustainability is a tragedy.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague on the environment and sustainable development committee for his speech, a bit of which touched on the bill before us. It is a pleasure serving on the committee with him. We have a lot of fun together. We do not often agree, but that does not mean that we cannot have a good time.

I would like to hear from the hon. member, given that his previous government shredded every federal environmental law that I worked for 40 years to develop. Given that the current Liberal government has broken its promise to move expeditiously to restore all of those shredded environmental laws, what does the member think can be done to the bill before us to strengthen it? I know that there is a dilemma when there are certain changes that we want to make to bills. There are limitations.

I was not yet on the committee when it reviewed the Federal Sustainable Development Act, but I am well aware that the report called for some rather substantive changes to the bill, including shifting to a whole-of-government responsibility for reviewing whether all the departments and agencies were actually doing a sustainable development assessment of their policies, proposals, and laws. We know that the government is adding more government departments and agencies, but the commissioner essentially said that is a pointless exercise if the government does not make the departments and agencies do those assessments and provide them to the ministers and to the cabinet.

We note that the bill would give an option to the Treasury Board to provide direction on the environmental impact of the proposals. One of the main criticisms the commissioner had of the current act was that it is only limited to environment; it does not cover all of the 17 sustainable development goals. I wonder if the member could speak to the reforms he thinks are necessary to make the Federal Sustainable Development Act deliver what it is supposed to.

●(1055)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her work on the committee. Yes, it is true we seldom agree, but we do get along. I would also note that in a Parliament that can at times be quite fractious, especially with a majority government that likes to impose its will on the rest of the members of this House, at that committee we do our best to achieve consensus. Of the three main reports that the committee has issued, two of them were consensus reports in which we agreed unanimously on the recommendations. Therefore, I do not know why the member is now criticizing the act, because it does pick up on many of the themes that the report raised.

I note that the minister and her performance have been roundly criticized in the Auditor General's report and the commissioner's report. If we impose more obligations on the minister and she is not capable of complying with the current ones, how would she do so in the future?

Hope runs eternal and it runs deep, so I am hoping that the government will make the changes that are required, as reflected in that Auditor General's report. However, the legislation before us does pick up on many of the recommendations that we made at committee, so we will be supporting it.

Statements by Members

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has said that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. It seems as though they have gone hand in hand off the cliff since the Liberals took power. We are losing ground on both fronts, as the member demonstrated in the report. He talked about the fact that we have seen this week showcase the disaster of the current government's environmental policy. The government has moved time allocation on a bill to prevent the export of energy off our west coast, and it has overseen regulatory changes that have led to the rejection of a pipeline for exporting our oil off the east coast.

The Minister of Democratic Institutions said before the election that she wanted "to landlock Alberta's tar sands." It seems as though the government is in fact achieving that objective. It is not going help our environment, because it is simply going to mean more opportunity and expansion for foreign oil with a worse environmental record, and it does not benefit the Canadian economy. Could the member share a bit more about why the government is proceeding in this disastrous direction, which is bad for our economy and bad for the environment?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. In fact, Conservatives have wondered the same thing.

I mentioned the small business tax. That is the first body blow that has been delivered by the Liberal government against small businesses. However, we found out this week that the energy east project is not proceeding, which is a pipeline that would have connected western oil in Canada to the east coast so that we could be self-sufficient in oil, rather than importing from despot countries like Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Algeria. Why would we not want to supply our own oil for our own needs?

I thank the member for raising this point, because it is another abject failure of the Liberal government. It goes on and on. Promise after promise has been broken by the Prime Minister, by the Minister of Environment, and by the natural resources minister, who is waving at me, hoping he will get me off my game. He is not going to get me off my game. It is a disaster that is happening on the other side, and the media are finally picking up on it.

Again, I thank the member for that question. I believe Canadians are looking for a change.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Abbotsford will have three minutes and 10 seconds remaining in questions and comments when the bill is next before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

PIERRE DE BLOIS

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we lost a great friend, mentor, advocate, and community builder, who passed away as a result of a sudden heart attack. Pierre de Blois was a generous, kind-hearted man who had a larger-than-

life personality and whose personal motto was *carpe diem*. He worked as a senior executive at the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages and as executive director of the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service. His greatest impact may have been his involvement with his community, where he pursued his passions for social justice, human rights, and the development of the national capital region. He was a co-founder of the Festival franco-ontarien, president of ACFO Ottawa, and member of the University of Ottawa board of governors.

Thank you, Pierre, for your your tremendous contribution, your dedication, your outstanding work, and your zest for life.

I offer my condolences to his wife, Deb Spurr, his family, and his loved ones.

Pierre, we will all of us miss you very much.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, consider two families. In one, a single income earner makes \$75,000. In another, two income earners make \$38,000 each. The family with a single income in this case pays more tax, even though they are making less money. That is not fair.

The government has tried to justify its unfair tax changes by claiming that the current rules give a mechanism for splitting income to some couples, a mechanism that does not exist for wage earners. However, this difference is the result of a Liberal decision to do away with income splitting for parents in the first place.

At the time of the last election, all parents could split their income, regardless of how they earned it. That was fair. The Liberals are now using a situation they created to justify their unfair changes. However, families understand that income splitting is always fair because it reflects the reality that families share their income and that families who earn the same income should pay the same rate of tax.

If the government wants a fairer tax system, then it should bring back income splitting for all parents.

* * *

ROTARY LOCAL LAGER

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled today to share a new social innovation from the constituency of Guelph. It is called Rotary Local Lager, a beer with a cause. The Rotary Club of Guelph and the Rotary Club of Peterborough have teamed up with Guelph's Wellington Brewery for a special brew that will help raise money for local and international causes.

Soon, other Ontarians will be able to feel charitable about picking up a few Rotary Local Lagers, as 50 cents of each purchase will go to rotary projects, including 10 cents specifically to Rotary International water projects.

Statements by Members

This is an innovation that all Guelphites can be proud of as the Rotary Club of Guelph is setting this world-first for Rotary. The Rotary Local Lager has been described as a crisp, refreshing blonde, so besides feeling good about the purchase, I can say that it is going to taste good, too.

As Canadians consider their next beer purchase, I encourage them to select a beer with a cause, the rotary local lager.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HUNTING IN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of men and women are getting ready to head into the woods of Abitibi-Témiscamingue today for the opening of the hunting season. Moose hunting is a major industry in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, with some 24,000 permits issued annually. In many villages, life revolves around the hunting and fishing seasons. Last Saturday, I returned to Moffet for the hunter's mass, a more than 35-year-old tradition honouring nature, where the local church serves as a gathering place for hunters, not to mention the beavers and moose in attendance.

In addition, many children are getting ready for their first hunt. I hope they will be left with a favourable impression of this noble activity, which belongs to a tradition thousands of years old for the first peoples of this country. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to wish all hunters a safe and successful hunt and remind them that alcohol and firearms do not mix.

To all hunters, may your aim be straight and true, because, as the French proverb goes, you cannot sell the bear's skin until you kill the bear.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL WRONGFUL CONVICTION DAY

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a member of my Mississauga Centre MP youth council.

Alice Zheng volunteers with the Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted. When I first met Alice, she told me that in 2014, 80 organizations from several countries had come together to support the creation of International Wrongful Conviction Day.

Wrongful Conviction Day is designated to recognize the tremendous personal, social, and legal costs associated with wrongful criminal convictions. It is also devoted to educating the public on the causes, consequences, and complications associated with wrongful convictions.

Several jurisdictions have already proclaimed October 2 as Wrongful Conviction Day. Alice organized a petition that calls on Parliament to do the same. Our justice system occasionally makes mistakes. We need to acknowledge that. With Alice's energy and passion, I look forward to a day when we no longer have wrongful convictions of innocents.

●(1105)

BRUCE GORDON

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness that I rise to pay tribute to a Saskatoon—Grasswood constituent, Mr. Bruce Gordon, who passed away just last Friday.

Bruce served and protected our community for 28 and a half years with the Saskatoon Police Service. Upon his retirement, he attended the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, where he received a law degree. Bruce was an outstanding volunteer and gave much of his time to many organizations. Bruce was also a former captain of the Saskatoon Blades hockey organization. He actually dropped the puck for the home opener on September 22. He was also an Ironman participant and was heavily involved in the crossfit community.

Just days after Bruce officially became a lawyer, he was diagnosed with stage IV pancreatic cancer. Recently, hundreds of people filled the city's Avalon Park to take part in an event called "Be Like Bruce!", organized by the crossfit community.

To his wife Chris and his family, I give my my deepest condolences.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the work of reconciliation with indigenous people is one of the most critical issues facing Canada today. That is why I am so pleased to sponsor my summer intern Mariam Manaa's e-petition. Mariam worked with local indigenous leader Stephen Paquette to develop a petition to redesign the Canadian citizenship guide and exam to acknowledge indigenous treaty rights, require applicants to answer a question about the traditional territories they may currently inhabit, and educate new Canadians about residential schools and the legacy of colonialism.

The petition has already garnered tremendous support not only in my riding of Oakville North—Burlington, but across Canada. The e-petition is open until December 15 and can be found by searching for petition 1228 at petitions.ourcommons.ca.

I encourage all Canadians to support this petition as we continue on the road to reconciliation.

* * *

YOUTH

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have a message of encouragement to the youngest members of the Bay of Quinte area. When we are young, it can be hard to find ways to be heard and to connect with others who share our unique vision of the world. However, the insights and fresh perspectives of the young are the world's best hope for the future. I have witnessed first-hand the energy, passion, and commitment of young people in this country and continue to be inspired.

Statements by Members

I am especially proud of the Bay of Quinte region for organizing their first ever youth summit held this past Friday. The Youth-2-Youth Summit succeeded in engaging over 150 young people with local dignitaries, community agencies, and business professionals on priority issues to our region. Youth summit members are ready to make positive differences in our community by stepping up their involvement. We have a lot to learn from the youth of today.

I encourage all young Canadians to help us find solutions and dismantle roadblocks that hinder forward momentum or positive change in their lives and those of others. Continue to dream big, speak up, and be the agents of change.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MICHEL BOURGET

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary man who left us far too soon, my friend Michel Bourget.

Our friendship and professional relationship began more than 30 years ago. As an avid photographer, he captured many precious, magical, and unique moments over the years and took family portraits for hundreds of families in the greater Quebec City region.

He was a certified professional photographer and owner of Studio Michel Bourget. He became a photographer in 1978 and was a credit to his art, an extraordinary mentor to all the future photographers in the region.

On behalf of my entire family, I want to offer my sincere condolences to his wife, Murielle, and his children, Sonia, Dominique, Claudine, and their spouses, and his grandchildren.

Michel was an attentive husband and devoted father and grandfather who loved his family very much. Michel captured so many memories that were dear to us. Now, it is up to us to keep a special place in our hearts for him for evermore.

Rest in peace, Michel.

* * *

● (1110)

[*English*]

BRIAN CARTY

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a coach, a teacher, a mentor, and a supporter of everything positive and everything right, Brian Carty was remembered by his sons as a friend to anyone when they needed one. Brian passed away peacefully on September 26, following a car accident three days earlier. The Fredericton community and his students and fellow faculty and staff at St. Thomas University, where he taught in the school of social work, mourn the loss of his uplifting personality and his big laugh and smile.

Brian also worked as an employment counsellor and volunteered with Canada World Youth, the YMCA-YWCA, and the Fredericton Community Living Society. He loved music and shared it at every opportunity. An ardent supporter of the Harvest Jazz & Blues

Festival, he could be found every year front-left stage wearing his iconic purple vest.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his sons Alexander and Ian, partner Anne, mother June, siblings John, Wendy, and David, their families, and all those who loved him dearly.

* * *

YOUTH

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day I am impressed by the youth in my riding. They are smart, diverse, talented, and hopeful, but far too often they struggle to find work, and so we did something about it. I got on the phone with local partners, including Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Employment and Social Services, COSTI, the LHION Network, and The Career Foundation, and together we put on an amazing hiring event. We pulled employers from the financing to tech sectors, to government and social services. We held CV workshops, coaching, and on-site interviews. At the end of it, I am proud to say that we successfully connected 35 exceptional young people with employers. They are now one step further ahead on their career path.

[*Translation*]

This event was the result of discussions I had with young professionals who live in priority communities. I would also like to give special thanks to Minister Hajdu.

[*English*]

Thanks to her department, The Career Foundation will be receiving nearly \$1.7 million over two years so it can continue its excellent work.

I will continue working hard on initiatives like this one so that every single young person in my riding who wants a good job has one.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that even during members' statements, they are not allowed mention other members' names, only positions or ridings.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

* * *

ATTACK IN EDMONTON

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded of everything we have to be thankful for as Canadians.

This past Saturday, I was saddened and outraged to hear of the cowardly terrorist attack that took place in my hometown of Edmonton, which left five people injured, including an Edmonton police officer. As the city still struggles to come to terms with this attack on our freedom and way of life, I was touched to see that one of the victims of Saturday's attack, Constable Michael Chernyk, was honoured by the Edmonton Oilers on Wednesday evening.

Statements by Members

I think I can speak for everyone in the House when I say that terrorist ideologies have no place in our great country. As we pause this weekend, I encourage everyone to thank our courageous first responders and all of those involved in stopping the suspect.

From my family to everyone, I wish all a happy Thanksgiving.

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, residents are concerned about how to travel to work or school in a quick and environmentally sound way. My constituents have told me that any strategy to reduce gridlock and our dependence on cars must include investments in public transit and active transport. I wholeheartedly agree, because these kinds of investments not only get people moving, but also reduce GHG emissions contribute to healthier living.

The advocacy of my constituents has paid off. We are investing billions in transit, including \$500 million in TTC repair and \$333 million in the Finch West light rail transit project. Millions nationally will also be going to support active transport. In Parkdale—High Park, this means the expansion of the west Toronto railpath cycling route. It also means the creation of 50 new bike-share stations, with seven new stations right in my riding.

I have a challenge for the good folks in Roncesvalles, High Park, Bloor West, Parkdale, Dundas West, and Sorauren Park. Next time they are thinking about commuting, they should leave their cars at home and hop on a bike-share bicycle. In Toronto, they will probably reach their destination faster, and their doctors and our planet will thank them for it.

* * *

• (1115)

WINDSOR—TECUMSEH

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh and the surrounding Windsor-Essex County are, of course, well-known for their expertise in the auto industry, so it is no wonder that we appreciate the small gears that turn the big gears of our economy.

Yes, I am talking about our vibrant entrepreneurial innovation and small businesses. From Walkerville, Riverside, Pilette Village, Ford City, and the Tecumseh business areas to the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation and the chamber of commerce, wherever people go, they will find a supportive entrepreneurial spirit for small and medium-sized businesses, providing jobs, growth, and development within our communities. Restaurants, artisans, craftspeople, shop owners, and service providers of every imaginable kind add value to our communities that goes well beyond the economic value alone.

I am proud to salute these important members of our community, just as I am proud to belong to a caucus that recognizes the vital role they play in helping to provide prosperity for us all.

HEALTH

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, The Miracle Marnie Foundation is a new organization that seeks to increase funding for childhood cancer research. It is named after the brave Marnie Geniole, and was founded by her father Thomas.

At two years old, Marnie was diagnosed with one of the rarest and least-understood cancers in the world: embryonal tumours with multilayered rosettes. Since then, she has been through three tumour-removal surgeries, three months of chemo, three stem cell transplants in Toronto, and 33 painful rounds of radiation at CHEO here in Ottawa.

However, only 4% of cancer research funding makes its way to childhood cancer treatment and research. Thomas and The Miracle Marnie Foundation want to change that, because 4% is not enough for our children. They are asking for a meeting with the Minister of Health. I look forward to bringing Thomas and Marnie to meet the Minister of Health and discuss how we can work together to fight all forms of childhood cancer so that children like Marnie will suffer no more.

* * *

THANKSGIVING

Mr. Joël Lighthound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity today as we are about to leave Ottawa for Thanksgiving weekend to wish all Canadians and all my friends and colleagues from both sides of the aisle a very happy Thanksgiving.

It is an opportunity to rejoice with family and friends and also to take some time to give thanks for the blessings we have received in the past year.

[*Translation*]

It is also an opportunity to think of the less fortunate, those who have suffered and those who are suffering. In light of the tragedies that our brothers and sisters in Edmonton, and our friends in the U.S. have experienced, and as we get ready to go home and give thanks, I would be remiss if I did not include them in my thoughts and prayers.

To them and all those who have faced tragedy this past year, I wish them well.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister claimed that energy east was cancelled because oil prices dropped. I have the letter here from TransCanada, the project's sponsor. It does not mention a word about oil prices, but it does say, "Notwithstanding these efforts, there remains substantial uncertainty around the scope, timing and cost associated with the regulatory review of the Projects." After completing its review of these factors and the associated costs implicated with the regulatory process, they decided to withdraw the project.

Did the Prime Minister not know that the reason the project was cancelled was because of his regulatory obstacles, or did he know, and did he mislead the House?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been all kinds of commentary over the last 24 hours, and some of the commentary includes this comment by the C.D. Howe Institute: "Basic economics—not regulation—ended the Energy East pipeline.... dethroned by the simple loss of its business case.... by the decline in global oil prices since 2014."

Terence Corcoran, writing in the *National Post* this morning, said that economic reality killed the energy east—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to the hon. member for Carleton for the next question, I want to remind hon. members that I am as interested in hearing the questions as I am the answers. With the chatter going back and forth, I am having a hard time, so if you could, just take into consideration the Speaker's feelings and allow him to hear the questions and the answers.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is what the company says. "[T]he existing and likely future delays resulting from the regulatory process, the associated cost implications and the increasingly challenging issues and obstacles facing the projects" has led the applicants to not proceed further with the project. That is the company.

The hon. member said yesterday, we won, they lost. Do members know who won? It was the dictators in Saudi Arabia and Venezuela who will continue to flood Canadian markets with their oil, but Canadian workers lost.

Why is it that the government is on the side of foreign dictators and not Canadian workers?

• (1120)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little perplexed by this line of questioning. What does that imply? That there should not be a made-in-Canada regulatory process? That environmental standards should not be part of the Canadian regulatory position? That indigenous partnership and meaningful consultation and accommodation should not be a part of the Canadian system?

By the way, why do we not talk about all the jobs that have been created by the pipelines approved by this government? Why do we not talk about Evraz in Regina creating all that steel to service those pipelines?

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government refused to answer whether or not the Minister of Finance has been involved in discussions around the tax haven in Barbados. We learned this week, through filings that had been quietly made by the company Morneau Shepell, that the finance minister's billion-dollar family business has set up a subsidiary in that tax haven, meaning that his company will only pay 2.5% tax on monies that are earned there, while small businesses will pay tax rates as high as 73% under the unfair Liberal tax changes.

I ask again, has the finance minister absented himself from any discussions related to the tax haven in Barbados?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. The historic amounts of nearly \$1 billion we invested in our last two budgets show how important we think it is to address these issues. Our plan is working. We are about to recoup nearly \$25 billion. A total of 627 cases have been transferred to criminal investigation, and there have been 268 warrants and 78 convictions. Let me be very clear. The net is tightening.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it came as a tremendous shock this week in the House of Commons when the member for Carleton revealed to all Canadians that the finance minister's family business has a subsidiary in Barbados, which is known as a tax haven. That makes no sense, particularly when the finance minister just introduced measures that would take \$250 million out of the pockets of Canadian entrepreneurs. That is unacceptable.

My question for the Prime Minister is simple: will he agree to get to the bottom of this situation? Did the finance minister withdraw from the discussions about tax havens, yes or no?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to cracking down on tax cheats and bringing them to justice with the help of our international partners.

I am proud of the leadership role we have taken on the international stage. Co-operation between revenue authorities, including the exchange of tax information, is an essential tool for maintaining the integrity of Canada's tax base.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is twice now the minister has said the same thing.

There is no mistaking what we are asking here. Morneau Shepell and the Minister of Finance are one and the same. In her responses, she mentioned neither the Minister of Finance nor Morneau Shepell.

Oral Questions

I know and very much respect the minister, so I would like her to make a real effort to shed some light on the situation and find out whether the Minister of Finance recused himself from the discussion around measures that would affect Morneau Shepell and his tax haven in Barbados.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised to hear that question coming from our colleagues opposite who were in government for 10 years.

According to a former Canada Revenue Agency minister, tax evasion and tax avoidance were never priority files.

Our government has invested nearly \$1 billion over the past two years, and we are on track to recoup \$25 billion. Unlike our colleagues opposite, we are working for Canadians.

* * *

• (1125)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, eight months after Canada was found liable for failing to protect survivors of the sixties scoop from losing their cultural identity, the Liberals are finally settling with survivors. Unfortunately, a lot of work is still needed. Survivors have said that money alone cannot compensate for what they lost.

Will the government learn from this lesson and stop fighting first nations children, for instance, or settle other outstanding claims, like with the Experimental Eskimos?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing advocacy for indigenous children across this country.

This morning, to have the agreement in principle, is an important first step. We have lots more work to do to be able to make sure that all childhood litigation is dealt with at the table, with reasonable settlements, but we also want to work with the Minister of Indigenous Services to make sure that the present child welfare system is totally overhauled so that children are not removed from their communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking on this topic earlier today, the minister said, and I quote, “I don’t know what people were thinking.”

That is precisely what I want to ask her. Unfortunately, discrimination against indigenous children is still happening as we speak. The Liberals are not complying with the three orders of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

Will the government learn from this legal battle against survivors of the sixties scoop, end the systemic discrimination against indigenous children, and stop fighting children in court?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, as the Minister of Indigenous Services,

to address this issue and to speak in agreement with my colleague about the absolute necessity of making sure that we attain equity for children. Every child in this country should be able to grow up knowing that they can live with their family, live in a house that is adequate, and have access to good quality education and health care.

We are working with our partners to make sure that we bring equity and justice so that every Canadian child will know that they will grow up having real and fair opportunities to thrive.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons for its work towards a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

Thanks to the campaign's efforts, nuclear weapons are illegal. More than 120 countries have approved the treaty, but Canada is still not one of them. Earlier this spring, the Liberal government voted against our motion calling on it to join the nuclear weapons ban treaty.

When will Canada sign the treaty?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nuclear disarmament is certainly our goal and we are taking measures to accede to the treaty the member opposite is referring to.

It was negotiated without the participation of nuclear weapons states, meaning it will not disarm a single nuclear weapon. Remember, in 2016, Canada rallied 159 states to help pass a treaty to see a fissile material cut-off. This is real and concrete work, and that is what we are doing as Canadians.

[English]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's excuses for not signing the nuclear ban treaty are ridiculous, and they know it. Canada's absence from the nuclear ban negotiations was shameful. This is a crucial moment.

At what point will the government stop taking its instructions from nuclear powers like the United States and start recognizing what the Nobel committee and most of the world already know, that nuclear weapons are illegal? When will Canada grow a spine and sign the treaty?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government remains committed to seeing the world free from nuclear weapons, and global disarmament is certainly our goal.

The UN treaty that was negotiated was done so without the participation of nuclear weapons states, meaning it will not disarm a single nuclear weapon. Our position is the same as our NATO allies such as Germany and Norway.

Oral Questions

Remember, in 2016, Canada rallied 159 states to help pass a treaty to see a fissile material cut-off. This is real and concrete work, and I hope the member opposite will support us in that effort.

[*Translation*]

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TAXATION

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the finance minister is looking forward to a relaxing Thanksgiving weekend at some fancy location while he ponders all of the tax savings he is getting with his family fortune being sheltered in Barbados.

I am also certain that my local farmers and local small business owners will not be so relaxed. They are worried sick because of these tax changes, unanswered questions, and uncertainty.

How can the finance minister protect his own family fortune while people are being taxed, people who are creating jobs and are the middle class? Does the finance minister not understand how hypocritical these tax changes are?

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are being true to a promise we made to the middle class to make our tax system fairer.

Our government consults and listens to Canadians. We listened to farmers from coast to coast to ensure that we get this right. I can assure my colleague that we will always stand behind Canadian farmers. We want to ensure the preservation and integrity of the family farm model. I invite the hon. member to also reassure the farmers in her riding.

We want to ensure that farmers who employ family members can continue to do so. We intend to keep supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and Canadian farmers while improving tax fairness.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, our farmers are not reassured. That is because the finance minister has been sitting in his ivory tower for the last two months dismissing and demeaning Canadians' real concerns. How cold hearted the Liberals have become, all because they need more money for their out-of-control spending.

Ahead of Thanksgiving, could the finance minister please give hard-working small businesses and farmers some good news, and tell them they have abandoned this cold-hearted, mean-spirited, hypocritical tax grab.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we want good news for Canadians, for business owners, it is the 400,000 jobs we have created in the last two years. It is the fastest growth in GDP in the last 15 years. That is because we have had a plan from the get-go that is working. We are helping the middle class. We are helping small business owners, and we will keep at it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance's motto seems to be “do as I say, not as I do”.

He is piling tax upon tax on Canadian small businesses, while at the same time stashing the profits from his family fortune in the tax haven of Barbados. He has some nerve.

To quote the Minister of National Revenue, the net is tightening on Morneau Shepell's actions.

Can the Minister of National Revenue confirm whether an investigation has been opened into the Minister of Finance's personal stake in tax havens?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance left the company before he became minister. He has always worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make sure he complies with all the rules.

However, if the member wants to know about the Minister of Finance, I can tell him that I am very proud to work for a finance minister who believes in social elevators and believes in the importance of reducing inequality and defending the middle class, which was ignored for 10 years by Mr. Harper's Conservatives because they were busy giving tax breaks to the wealthy.

I am very proud to work side by side with this minister, who has lowered taxes for nine million Canadians and lifted 300,000 children out of poverty with the Canada child benefit. It makes me proud.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April and her family own a trucking business within my riding in Alberta. They have four children, who have worked for the company since they could walk. Their older son drives truck full time. Their daughters work in the office, and the youngest helps clean up the trucks. While saving a little money here and there, they have managed to put aside some university savings for the children, but now the Liberals' tax changes are putting this under threat.

How is it fair that Morneau Shepell can use a Barbados company in order to avoid taxes? Meanwhile, the finance minister robs university savings from April's daughters in order to pay for the Liberals' out-of-control spending. How is that fair?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague. We listened to Canadians and we are tabling proposals that will bring greater tax fairness where it is lacking in our system. We want to make sure we are doing things correctly and maintaining a suitable environment for entrepreneurs by keeping our tax rate the lowest in the G7, avoiding unnecessary paperwork to make life easier for our entrepreneurs, and making sure that intergenerational transfers are not impacted by the measures we put forward. We reached out to Canadians, we heard them and we continue to work for greater tax fairness.

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Murray and Lorraine, in my riding of Bow River, say they could not afford to both keep the family farm operation and contribute to RRSPs, so they planned to use their farmland as retirement income. They want to know why the Liberals have, as they put it, changed the rules at the end of our game, and jeopardized their retirement plans, while the finance minister's family fortune and Barbados operation will not even be touched.

How is that possibly fair to Murray and Lorraine?

• (1135)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member. We have always mentioned it and said that our intention is for these changes not to be retroactive.

We have listened to Canadians from coast to coast, to farmers and fishers. The guiding principles, as we review the comments we have heard from Canadians, is to make sure that we keep supporting small businesses, keep a low tax rate for small businesses, and make sure that we support the family farm model, which we have always supported, so that intergenerational transfer is not impacted and family members can continue to work on the farm.

We will always stand behind our entrepreneurs. We will always stand behind farmers.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian chambers of commerce and accountants agree: this so-called tax reform is unacceptable and counterproductive for all entrepreneurs. Middle-class jobs will be lost and businesses will be taxed at 73%. Even worse, the Minister of Finance's business, Morneau Shepell, as well as the Prime Minister's family trust will not be affected.

When will the government stop laughing at the middle class and stop squeezing small and medium-sized businesses that create jobs?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our proposals have always focused on greater tax fairness. Our current tax system has some inherent inequities that allow some wealthy Canadians to access benefits that the vast majority of Canadians, whom my colleague and I represent here in the House, do not have access to. This is what we want to address, since we want more tax fairness for the middle class.

*[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from Jack Layton to Jagmeet Singh, New Democrats have always stood firmly against Canada joining the U.S. ballistic missile defence system. It is an extremely expensive system, yet still unreliable, and its continued expansion risks launching a new global nuclear arms race.

On Wednesday, the Conservatives called on the government to change its position and join the American ballistic missile defence system. So far, the Liberals have only said that they are not ruling it out.

Will the Liberals stand with New Democrats today on the side of peace and disarmament, or will they adopt the reckless and dangerous policy of the Conservatives?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety and security of Canadians are priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces and our government.

Our new defence policy recognizes that ballistic missile technology poses a growing threat and that we must work more closely with our American allies to address the threats we are all exposed to. As part of the modernization of NORAD, we plan on taking a comprehensive look at the threats and dangers facing North America, in every area.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with winter approaching, seasonal workers in New Brunswick are feeling anxious because the Liberals abandoned their promise to deal with the spring gap. Workers and their families may find themselves without income for weeks in the very dead of winter. The Liberals are telling them to cross their fingers and hope the unemployment rate goes up so they will be eligible. What a boneheaded approach.

When will the Liberals do the right thing and keep their promise to deal with the spring gap once and for all?

*Oral Questions***NATURAL RESOURCES***[English]*

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that Canadians get the support when they need it from the EI system. This is why we have put in a series of changes to make access to the benefits much faster. We have also made changes to make sure that the people who are in a gap in employment or are working seasonally can work and receive benefits in an appropriate way, so that they get the benefits and support they need to participate in the economy.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to fine-tune solutions. One of the challenges we have is a good one, with a buoyed economy, with thousands more new jobs, EI premiums are changing, as are benefits. We are working very hard to make sure that seasonal employees are treated properly.

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TAXATION

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hosted a town hall meeting in my riding on Tuesday evening that was attended by over 120 people. Two of the attendees were a senior couple who own 220 acres of land with a cash crop. One of their three sons, who lives here in Ottawa, wants to buy the farm to earn income to subsidize the money he earns as a self-employed filmmaker. I wonder if the Liberals can explain how it is fair that selling their farm to their son would cost them significantly more than if they sold it to a multinational corporation, say like McCain Foods.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows how important farmers are to our economy. That is why it wants to ensure its measures are appropriate.

I have worked on this file. We listened to farmers and met with industry representatives. I can assure the House that we will take all of their views into account as we develop our plan before moving forward.

[English]

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ontario farmer, Mark Wales, wants to know why, under the new tax rules, it would not make financial sense for a farmer to sell to his own children as opposed to an unrelated third party. These Liberal changes are a direct attack on the family and future generations of farmers like those in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. How is that fair when the finance minister's family company in Barbados is left untouched?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. We have always said it. As we review the comments we have received from Canadians, we want to make sure that intergenerational transfers of businesses or of farms are not impacted.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, Canadians were dealt two major body blows. First, the Liberals shut the door on further consultations on their cold-hearted, mean-spirited project to bash Canadian jobs and middle-class Canadians. A second body blow was the \$15-billion energy east pipeline, with 15,000 middle-class jobs cancelled due to Liberal interference in the environmental review process. Why have the Liberals abandoned middle-class Canadians?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member has asked the question, because it gives me a chance to remind him of the economic activity and the jobs that have been created by pipeline approvals over the last two years. More than 22,000 jobs have been created, and many of them, by the way, in the member's own province of British Columbia, and across the southern prairie. It is also important to remember that steel will come from a company that is headquartered in Regina. Therefore, the combination of job creation, economic development, and good jobs for the people of western Canada—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Abbotsford.

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ETHICS

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the finance minister has been artfully dodging questions about his own foreign tax shelters, it turns out that exactly a year ago, his billion-dollar company, Morneau Shepell, was registered in Barbados where he only pays tax at a rate of two and a half per cent. Yet, he is asking Canadian small business owners to pay tax at a rate of 73%. How do they spell "hypocrisy"? Again, for the artful dodger himself, can he tell this House whether any of his proposed tax increases would actually apply to him?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the minister left the company before taking up his duties as minister. He has always worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner with complete transparency to make sure he complies with the rules at all times.

I want to reassure the opposition member that we will always stand behind our small business owners. We are keeping their tax rate the lowest in the G7 to promote growth, because we know small business owners contribute to this country's prosperity.

That being said, the fact is that our current tax system has some inequities we need to correct. We have made a very clear commitment to the middle class to build a fairer tax system. We are in the process of reviewing the comments we heard from coast to coast.

Oral Questions

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, caribou are an iconic Canadian species, but to survive they need an intact ecosystem. In addition, many indigenous communities rely on the caribou to survive. A 2015 federal assessment found that 81% of our remaining woodland caribou are in decline and projected to fall another 30%. The key identified reason for the decline is a loss of habitat to forestry, to energy development, and wildfires. Can the minister advise when range plans for protection of caribou habitat will be publicly released?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to working with the provinces, territories, and indigenous peoples on the protection and recovery of Canada's species at risk, including caribou, in a timely manner, with robust recovery plans based on the best available science and traditional knowledge.

We are working with the provinces and territories on the range-specific plans for boreal caribou by the October 2017 deadline. This was agreed upon by all parties, as laid out in the boreal caribou recovery strategy.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' overall distrust of our security agencies is a direct consequence of the fact that we have no mechanism to provide real-time oversight and accountability.

The government is currently in court with environmental groups it has accused of spying. Even the watchdog tasked with monitoring CSIS operations failed in its duty by dismissing their complaint and throwing a cloak of total secrecy over the whole case.

• (1145)

[English]

Bill C-59 does nothing to fix these problems, but pays lip service to them. When will the minister truly take steps to make real-time oversight, fix these problems, limit the excessive powers of CSIS, and truly protect the rights of Canadians to peaceful protests?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the details of Bill C-59 have been examined by the most eminent experts in the field. Every single one of them has said that this represents a major step forward in terms of transparency, scrutiny, and accountability, including real-time oversight and the creation, for the first time, of the office of the intelligence commissioner that will examine the activities of security agencies before those activities are undertaken, as well as having them reviewed afterward.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sixties scoop is a dark and painful chapter in Canada's history.

The national settlement is a critical step toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Those affected by the scoop suffered considerable harm, including losing their culture and heritage.

Can the minister tell the House what efforts were made to reach a national settlement?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I was very proud to announce that an agreement in principle was reached, an important step in settling this legal dispute.

Through this agreement we are addressing issues raised by the lead plaintiff in this case, as well as in other similar class action suits. This does not close the book on the sixties scoop. We are committed to righting all the other past wrongs.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cancellation of the energy east project is just another example of Liberal meddling. By changing the rules mid-process, the Liberals are telling Canadians, "Don't buy Canadian oil; buying from foreign dictatorships like Algeria and Venezuela is much better."

When will the Liberals stand up for Canadians and not foreign despots?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada did not change the rules. The principles we announced in January of 2016 would have been exactly the same rules that would have applied to energy east. The principles we used to make decisions in the case of the Trans Mountain expansion and the Enbridge Line 3 led to approvals, which will create thousands of jobs, and billions of dollars of economic activity, particularly for western Canada.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the \$35 billion Pacific NorthWest LNG project was cancelled. Then the \$5.4 billion northern gateway pipeline was cancelled. Then the Nexen's Aurora LNG project was cancelled. Now the \$15.7 billion energy east project has been cancelled.

Enough is enough. Changing the rules midstream is not right. The Liberals are sending a message to investors that Canada is a hostile place to invest.

Why are the Liberals supporting foreign oil dependency while discouraging investment right here in Canada? Enough is enough.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Nova Gas pipeline, 3,000 jobs, has been approved. The Line 3 replacement project, 7,000 jobs, has been approved. The Trans Mountain expansion pipeline, 15,440 jobs, has been approved, and support for the Keystone XL pipeline, 6,440 jobs. That is an impressive total of job creation and economic activity. We are very proud of that accomplishment.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Liberals' fault that the energy east project is no more. Those same Liberals who claim to want to help the middle class are pleased with this outcome. They killed a job-creating project.

In fact, the company said that following in-depth analysis of the new regulations they decided to pull the plug on the project.

How can the government be so proud of the end of a project that would have been very good for the middle class and would have created jobs in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and across the country?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not proud of a project abandoned; we are happy we are creating jobs in the energy sector. We understand that the energy sector is a driving force in the Canadian economy and that the natural resource sectors of forestry, mining, oil and gas have been fundamental to the building of the Canadian economy, and will continue to be. If we do not have a regulatory process that carries the confidence of Canadians on the three pillars of economic growth, environmental stewardship, and indigenous participation, our history will be the same as the sorry history of the Harper government. We can do better; we are doing better.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday TransCanada announced the cancellation of the energy east pipeline. To the dismay of my constituents in Mooseman, Saskatchewan, energy east was expected to create thousands of jobs, many of which would have been in Mooseman.

Now, due to the Prime Minister's blatant lack of support for the Canadian energy sector, this pipeline has been cancelled and hundreds of job opportunities have disappeared overnight.

When will the Prime Minister apologize to the people of Mooseman for his failure to champion this job-creating project?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Enbridge Line 3 project goes right by Mooseman.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: No it doesn't. Get a map.

Mr. Larry Maguire: You got your geography wrong, Jim.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Hire a new cartographer.

Hon. Jim Carr: More jobs will be created. Mr. Speaker. Not only that, Evraz will be producing hundreds of kilometres of steel to support these projects.

Why do the members opposite not join us on this side of the House in our support for a dynamic energy industry for Canada?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I am sure the minister appreciates the coaching he is getting from the other side, but it is preventing me from hearing the next question from the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh. I will let her proceed.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my office has received numerous calls from persons living with disabilities and their advocates, expressing serious concern over the delays in the government's plan to table a new accessibility act. I am sure the new minister would agree that Canadians have waited long enough for comprehensive legislation.

When will the minister provide the public with a clear timeline for when Canadians with disabilities can finally see the government table the accessibility act?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her dedication to this file.

The government made a commitment to people with disabilities across Canada to table new legislation. In fact, that was part of the mandate letter from the Prime Minister. We have consulted nearly 6,000 Canadians across the country, and the input we received will inform the content of the new bill. We are making great progress on the drafting of the legislation.

I have some good news to announce: the bill will be introduced soon.

[*English*]

My door is open, and I invite my colleagues to work with me on this file in the future.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we owe an enormous debt to our nation's veterans, and the men and women who have served our country deserve our gratitude. That is why Canadians set up a network of veterans hospitals, including the George Derby Centre veterans hospital in Burnaby, B.C. However, changes in the funding model have meant reductions in funding, and this is profoundly hurting veterans and seniors at the George Derby Centre.

Will the minister come and meet with the residents and their families at the George Derby Centre? Will the government end the funding crisis so veterans get the care they so richly deserve?

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a very specific case on which I have not been fully briefed or of which I am aware. However, I would be happy to meet with any concerned veterans and their families at any time. Therefore, I will work with his office to make that happen.

In the meantime, on the issue of funding for our veterans, so far we have put \$7 billion into funding for our veterans and their families.

I am very proud that yesterday we had the opportunity to deal with a joint suicide prevention strategy, which brought together all parts of our armed forces, the Department of National Defence, and Veterans Affairs, to help our veterans and their families with a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday TransCanada announced that it had had enough of Canada's "unwelcoming policy environment and an uncertain approval process" and cancelled the energy east pipeline project. This will cost Canada thousands of jobs and billions of dollars. One expert said that there was "something deeply dysfunctional" in Canada, forcing companies to look elsewhere to invest.

Why do the Liberals continue to make decisions that hurt Canadians?

• (1155)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to make decisions that recognize the importance of the energy sector in Canada, particularly in western Canada.

We were very pleased to make the determination that the Trans Mountain expansion was in the national interest, because of the 15,440 jobs that it would create, because of the expansion of export markets. We are not comfortable sending 99% of our exports of oil and gas to the United States. We have now opened up the Asian market. We also understand the importance that environmental stewardship, indigenous participation, and economic growth—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, TransCanada was forced to abandon energy east after the Liberal government changed the rules halfway through the game. Foreign oil wins and who loses? Canadians. Canadians are losing big, \$56 billion in energy projects have been cancelled, thanks to Liberal incompetence.

Why are the Liberals punishing Canada's energy sector and the thousands of middle-class jobs that depend on it?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to know that the member from Saskatoon is interested in job creation. He will also know that thousands of jobs have been created in Saskatchewan by decisions taken by the government. He will also know that Evraz, which is the producer of

hundreds of kilometres of steel that would go into these pipes, is giving additional employment opportunity for people in his home province.

I invite the member for join with us in our support for the energy workers right across the west, including in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada produces some of the most environmentally and socially responsible oil in the world. However, now the Liberal government is making it easier to purchase oil in Saudi Arabia than it is to purchase it from western Canada.

Will the Liberals admit their politically driven changes to the National Energy Board are driving investment out of the country and only deepens our dependence on more foreign oil?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my fellow Manitoban knows that jobs are being created in our own province. The approval of the Enbridge Line 3 expansion will create many jobs, I am sure, also in his own riding of Brandon. He knows the economic activity that will come from these pipeline approvals—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I am sure the minister appreciates the help he is getting, but he is answering the question on his own. If members can keep it down, then I will be able to hear it as well.

Hon. Jim Carr: Mr. Speaker, we are very happy to have approved pipelines, creating important jobs in the energy sector in western Canada.

We believe that natural resources continue to be a major driver of the Canadian economy. Job creation and investment in our communities is a combined goal, I think, of all members who sit in the House.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Prime Minister, along with a number of ministers of the crown, travelled to Iqaluit to launch the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, with the leadership from Inuit Nunangat.

The committee's intent is to advance the shared priorities of Inuit and the Government of Canada, including the high incidence of tuberculosis in the Inuit population.

[*Translation*]

Can the Minister of Indigenous Services update the House on the work that has been accomplished so far by the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, I was very pleased yesterday to join in an announcement that we would be establishing a task force for the elimination of tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat. That will be the mandate of this important task force.

It is simply intolerable and tragic that the rate of tuberculosis in Canada's Inuit is 270 times the rate that it is in the Canadian-born non-indigenous population. That is why we are going to take bold action. We will be working with partners among Canada's Inuit leaders, provinces and territories, and we will work together to eliminate tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat.

* * *

• (1200)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Manny Roserio, a small-business owner in Oshawa, employs 55 people and makes major investments in our community. Enterprise Airlines was planning the first daily scheduled charter service into Oshawa from Buffalo. Now that the public safety minister is closing down our local CBSA office, without any prior consultation, it is going to make this much more difficult.

With the Liberals' small-business tax increase and with our local CBSA office closing, the Liberals seem fixated on making communities like mine less competitive. How is that fair?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CBSA makes decisions with respect to the distribution of its business services across the country according to a business plan that reflects the activity in the areas where the offices are located. If there is a need for consultation and engagement, I would be happy to make sure that it is provided.

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PARKS CANADA

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, prior to entering politics, I spent 32 years working in national parks and national historic sites for Parks Canada. During that time I saw first-hand the dedication of Parks Canada staff, in both good times and bad. With the recent wildfires in western Canada, Parks Canada experienced the most significant environmental emergency in the agency's history at Waterton Lakes National Park.

Could the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please update the House on how Parks Canada managed the incident and the next steps?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for his question and for his long service with Parks Canada. Our thoughts are with those impacted by the Kenow fire, which caused significant damage to Waterton Lakes National Park.

I am very pleased to report that thanks to extensive preparation and planning, and a focused response from Parks Canada, the damage to the town site was limited, and there were no human casualties.

I would like to thank Parks Canada's world-class firefighters, local firefighters, and emergency workers, and commend all of our park staff, under the leadership of superintendent Ifan Thomas, for their super management of this very difficult situation.

Oral Questions

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crisis facing Rohingya people in Burma, which we consider a genocide, continues, but action at the UN Security Council is being blocked by China. This is tragic, but not much of a surprise, given the treatment of minorities in China, be they Christian, Tibetan Buddhist, Uighur Muslim, or Falun Gong.

The government has talked about its desire to engage China. Has the minister spoken to her Chinese counterpart about the Rohingya crisis, or is this another case where they are ignoring human rights to appease the Chinese state?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for ending the persecution of the Rohingya falls squarely upon the shoulders of the commander-in-chief, the military leadership in Myanmar, and Aung San Suu Kyi.

On Saturday, September 30, the minister spoke directly with the commander-in-chief. The minister said to him directly that violators of human rights must be held to account, humanitarian access to the region must be permitted, and the Annan report must be implemented.

On Monday, Canada's ambassador to Myanmar joined 50 other foreign representatives for a visit to the Rakhine State so they could see first-hand what is happening.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last winter a Rio Tinto ship became stuck in the ice because of the poor state of federally owned icebreakers.

This week an internal report has revealed that the current situation could put Quebec's port activities at risk this winter.

This could affect thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic spinoffs, and yet this government does nothing. The Davie shipyard has offered to lease some icebreakers as part of Project Resolute.

Will the government actually do something about this, or is it stuck in the ice, too?

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity, in fact the privilege, to meet with our men and women from the Canadian Coast Guard, from Vancouver Island all the way to Prince Edward Island, and I can say that our men and women expertly maintain our fleets, that the government is dedicated to providing new vessels to the Canadian Coast Guard, including a polar icebreaker, and that we are working with partners to make sure that we provide the services Canadians expect.

Routine Proceedings

Our government will always make sure that the men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard have the tools they need to do their jobs.

* * *

● (1205)

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government will not spend a penny on jobs in the regions, but it does not mind loosening the purse strings for the Governor General. Last year, all that jet-setting and canapé-eating cost us \$53 million. God save the Queen, indeed.

Then the government had the nerve to tell Quebeckers that it has no more money for our dairy producers and that it costs too much to bring cellphone coverage and broadband to the regions.

Is that what the government calls getting royally screwed?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will give the parliamentary secretary a chance to respond, but I would like to remind members of the House that, when referring to the Queen or the Governor General, they must show respect and choose their words carefully.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question is patently false.

We are investing in the regions of Quebec, all across Quebec, through the connect to innovate program. Other repayable and non-repayable grants are available through Canada Economic Development, or CED. We are create jobs in the regions. Since we were elected, we have created 437,000 jobs across Canada. Canada has its lowest unemployment rate in 40 years.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada tried to cover up the decline of French by publishing the census data in the middle of the summer and fudging the numbers to mislead the population.

The figures the department provided on francophones, allophones, and anglophones add up to 121% of the total population.

Why is the Government of Canada providing erroneous language statistics? Is it trying to lead Quebeckers to believe that French can thrive and survive in Canada?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's position is to truly support Canada's two main linguistic communities. Our two official languages are at the heart of our identity. We are always there to support our two official languages, whether it is through the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, the francophone significant benefit program run by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to increase the number of French speakers outside Quebec, or our court challenges

program, which will increase support for people across the country who want to protect the French language.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. While touring my riding, I heard concerns from many constituents about the high cost of living in Nunavut. Food, equipment, and transportation are all extremely expensive, and we rely heavily on air transport for our goods and services.

Transport Canada has proposed new regulations affecting duty time that could make airline operations and our cost of living even more expensive. When finalizing these regulations, will the minister take into account our unique circumstances and consider the impact these changes will have on northern airlines and Nunavummiut?

● (1210)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his continued advocacy for the people of Nunavut. I know he also supports improving aviation safety in Canada. We do recognize that the north relies heavily on air transport for the movement of passenger goods as well as essential services between communities. We are analyzing all the submissions as part of this review, including some that came from the north, and we will continue that conversation as we move forward. We understand.

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to correct the record. I misspoke a moment ago. The unemployment rate represents the lowest rate of unemployment the country has seen in nine years. The 40% figure is actually the highest rate of job creation over the past year.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe that is debate, but thank you for the update.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual reports on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act of the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages for the year 2016-17.

[Translation]

These reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

*Routine Proceedings***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two documents to table.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the government's official response to the 29th report of the Standing Committee on National Defence entitled, "Report 7—Operating and Maintenance Support for Military Equipment—National Defence", of the 2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, tabled in the House of Commons on June 8, 2017.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the government's official response to the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled, "Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence", of the 2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, tabled in the House of Commons on June 8, 2017.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a very busy day. I have four documents to table.

Pursuant to section 150 of the Financial Administration Act and for referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Defence Construction Canada 2016-17 annual report on operations, and the Canada Lands Company Limited 2016-17 annual report on operations.

Pursuant to section 150 of the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act and for referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board 2016-17 annual report on operations.

Pursuant to section 22.3 of the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act and for referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Office of the Procurement Ombudsman 2016-17 annual report on operations.

Pursuant to section 84 of the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and for referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2016-17 annual report on the activities relating to the administration of the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act.

● (1215)

[*English*]**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the meeting of the committee on Middle East questions in Geneva, Switzerland, July 6-7, 2017.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in relation to Bill C-17, an act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act.

The committee has studied the bill, and it has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

[*Translation*]**NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT**

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-366, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Abitibi and Témiscamingue regions).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reintroduce this bill, which would address the cuts that the Conservatives made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. These cuts left the majority of our waterways unprotected, even though they had been protected for years by one of this country's oldest acts.

Today, I am introducing a bill to protect the most important waterways in my region. There are around 50 of them. Some are watersheds, and others are part of the Algonquins' traditional canoe routes. Thousands of people used these waterways to reach previously unexplored lands. There is no doubt that these waterways are in need of protection.

I sincerely hope that these waterways will be protected again one day; they are so important to my region.

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

* * *

[*English*]**NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT**

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-367, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Colquitz River, Tod Creek and Craighflower Creek).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this private member's bill today with a goal of restoring federal environmental protection to these waterways. They have been without protection since 2012, when the Conservatives removed all federal environmental protection for each and every lake, river, and stream on Vancouver Island.

Despite a clear promise by the Liberal government to act, it has failed to introduce this legislation, so I have had to do so today. These waterways are vital components of our local ecosystems, and instead of benefiting from government action, now I am forced to thank local groups like the Peninsula Streams Society and the Friends of Tod Creek for the amazing work they have accomplished in restoring the Tod Creek watershed. These local efforts are running far ahead of government action.

The current threats to Colquitz Creek and the mysterious spill in Craigflower Creek demonstrate the importance of restoring federal environmental protection to these important local waterways.

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

* * *

• (1220)

NAVIGATION PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Sooke River, Jordan River, Bilston Creek and Muir Creek).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as in the previous bill I just introduced, this private member's bill would reinstate federal environmental protection for important waterways, this time in the western part of my riding. Once again, local efforts are running far ahead of Liberal action.

The Sooke River provides a positive story for all of us of joint action between the T'Sou-ke First Nation and the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition to attempt to restore a chinook run, which will be critical to the survival of southern resident killer whales. Earlier this year, the Jordan River stewardship round table was established to spearhead efforts to restore native trout and salmon runs wiped out by industrial activity over the last 60 years.

It is ironic that I am introducing these private members' bills on the day when we are debating the Liberals' glitteringly general Federal Sustainable Development Act instead of getting down to the specific actions necessary to protect the environment, such as those proposed in my two private members' bills.

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

* * *

CHILD HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-228, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibiting food and beverage marketing directed at children).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise in the House today and to introduce Senate public bill, Bill S-228, the child health protection act, which seeks to amend the Food and Drugs Act to prohibit the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children.

I would like to thank Olympic gold medalist Senator Nancy Greene Raine of British Columbia for her tremendous work on this issue, as well as our Senate colleagues, who unanimously passed this bill last week.

The rapidly increasing rate of childhood obesity has become a matter of national concern in Canada. The World Health Organization's commission on ending childhood obesity found that there is unequivocal evidence that the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages has a negative impact on childhood obesity, and it recommends that any attempt to tackle childhood obesity should include a reduction in the exposure of children to marketing.

As parliamentarians, it is our duty to stand up for those who are most vulnerable in our society, and no group is more vulnerable than our children. The protection of children from the manipulative influence of marketing of unhealthy food and beverages is predicated on a pressing and substantial concern and calls for a federal legislative response.

This bill is that legislative response, and I ask all members for their support.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe that you will find consent for the following travel motion.

I move:

That, in relation to the 2017 Westminster Workshop for Public Accounts Committees and the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC), three members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to travel to London, United Kingdom, in the Fall of 2017, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS**GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition today that calls on the government to eliminate the federal tax, the GST, on essential baby products.

Routine Proceedings

In my opinion, the GST has always been a tax that should apply only to non-essential luxuries. Diapers are essential for babies. No baby can go all day with a bare bottom, which is why it is completely unfair to parents to charge GST on diapers.

The petition also includes basic breastfeeding products. We need to encourage mothers to breastfeed given how beneficial it is for babies' health. By removing the federal tax on products needed for breastfeeding, such as breast pumps, the government would demonstrate its goodwill and encourage breastfeeding.

* * *

●(1225)

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1104 to 1106 and 1111.

[Text]

Question No. 1104—**Mr. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to the application by the Canadian Transit Company to expand the Ambassador Bridge, entitled “The Ambassador Bridge Enhancement Project”: (a) how long has the application been in the system; (b) why has there been a delay in the issuing of a permit under the International Bridges and Tunnels Act; (c) what is the target date for the permit to be issued; and (d) which official or officials considered the project?

Hon. Marc Garneau Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to protecting the safety, security, and efficiency of Canada’s vital trade links.

With respect to (a), on February 27, 2014, the Canadian Transit Company submitted an application for a proposed project pursuant to the International Bridges and Tunnels Act.

With regard to (b), there is no legislated time frame under which International Bridges and Tunnels Act decisions must be made; as a result, there has not been a delay in issuing a permit. The length of the review process was caused by the complexity of the project and the requirement for extensive public, stakeholder, and international consultations in the review of the application. The results of these consultations are available on Transport Canada’s website at <https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/page-653.html>. Once the review of the application and of the comments received during the consultations is complete, the Minister of Transport makes a recommendation to the Governor in Council for the proposed project.

With regard to (c), there is no legislated time frame under which International Bridges and Tunnels Act decisions must be made.

With regard to (d), the Minister of Transport makes a recommendation to the Governor in Council. The Governor in Council decides whether to approve the construction of the proposed project.

Question No. 1105—**Mr. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to the investigation into the Clyde River Fish Kill in Clyde River and area on Prince Edward Island (PEI): (a) how many personnel from Environment and Climate Change Canada (EC) have been involved in the investigation; (b) with regard to interviews conducted between EC officials and individuals involved in the

case, how many interviews have taken place, and over what period of time; (c) with regard to trips to PEI related to this investigation made by off-island EC offices, (i) how many trips were made, (ii) how many vehicle hours have been accumulated, (iii) what was the duration of each trip, (iv) what were the accommodation and travel status costs; (d) who requested this extended investigation at the federal level; (e) which individual, or individuals, from PEI requested the assistance of EC; (f) has EC produced a report on the extraordinary rain event that caused the flooding and, if so, what did the report conclude; and (g) what are the details of all correspondence, both written and electronic, related to this matter, between officials from the PEI Department of the Environment and EC personnel?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment and Climate Change Canada, ECCC, takes threats to the environment very seriously.

ECCC has opened an investigation into alleged violations of subsection 36(3) of the Fisheries Act in relation to a fish kill in the Clyde River, Prince Edward Island, that occurred on July 25, 2016. Two ECCC personnel have been involved in this investigation so far, and a report regarding the rain event is being produced.

When ECCC enforcement officers have reasonable grounds to believe a violation has occurred, they can open an investigation in order to gather evidence related to the alleged incident. As ECCC is currently investigating this matter, it would be inappropriate to provide further details at this time.

Question No. 1106—**Mr. Mark Strahl:**

With regard to the regulatory impact analysis done for regulations respecting reduction in the release of Methane and Certain Volatile Organic Compounds: (a) what source data did the government use to conclude that “without immediate action, it is expected that fugitive and venting methane emissions from the oil and gas sector in Canada will continue to be released at high levels of about 45Mt CO₂E per year between 2012 and 2035”; (b) what source data was used to calculate Figure 1: Baseline scenario and policy scenario methane emissions and compliance costs by year; (c) which distributors and how many were consulted to provide estimates on pneumatic controllers and pumps compliance costs; (d) what documentation does the government have showing the oil and gas industry was “satisfied with the modifications that the Department offered”; and (e) what environmental non-governmental organization’s information was used as source data for any conclusions reached within the regulatory impact analysis?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the baseline methane emissions quoted in the analysis are based on projections from Canada’s second biennial report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

With regard to (b), Figure 1 summarizes the key impacts estimated in the cost-benefit analysis. The sources used to derive these estimates include publicly available sources, such as the National Energy Board’s Canada’s Energy Future projections and the U.S. EPA Natural Gas STAR, reports from independent contractors such as Clearstone Engineering and the Prasino Group, and data collected by western provinces under the Petrinex reporting system.

Government Orders

With regard to (c), the distributors were Laurentide Controls and Spartan Controls. The complete quotation from the Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement is “The oil and gas industry was satisfied with the modifications that the Department offered, but continue to challenge federal regulations on the sector.” The statement is based on feedback given to Environment and Climate Change Canada during meetings held in the fall of 2016.

With regard to (d), reports included “Pneumatic Pump Alternatives for Cold Weather”, 2016, by GreenPath Energy, and “Zero Emission Technologies for Pneumatic Controllers in the USA”, 2016, by Carbon Limits. Canadian oil and gas service providers are GreenPath Energy and Cap-Op Energy.

With regard to (e), data was used from an ICF International report entitled “Economic Analysis of Methane Emission Reduction Opportunities in the Canadian Oil and Natural Gas Industries”, which was commissioned by two environmental non-governmental organizations, the Environmental Defense Fund, or EDF, and the Pembina Institute, to estimate emissions from compressors.

Question No. 1111— **Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:**

With regard to Canada's commitment to the UN Green Climate Fund: since November 4, 2015, what is the total amount that Canada has committed to the Fund, and, of this amount, what has been paid as of June 30, 2017?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has pledged \$300 million to the Green Climate Fund to support its initial resource mobilization period, 2015-2018. As of June 30, 2017, Canada has paid \$168 million of this amount. The remaining \$132 million will be delivered in fiscal year 2018-19.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 1108 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1108—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to treatments and therapies for rare diseases (known as orphan drugs): (a) how many orphan drugs were granted market authorization by Health Canada between May, 2013, and June, 2017; (b) how many orphan drugs were issued market authorization between November 4, 2015, and June 20, 2017; and (c) what are the names of all orphan drugs granted market authorization in both (a) and (b)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We have three minutes and 10 seconds left for the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Abbotsford repeatedly stated that the government's proposed tax reforms for private corporations would result in a tax rate of 73%, but repetition is not a form of evidence. Could the member for Abbotsford explain for this House under what circumstances an incorporated Canadian would pay a tax rate of 73%?

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty easy question to answer. As small businesses across this country earn income, some of it will be paid out in salary and some in dividends, but many small businesses will actually keep the money within their small corporations, put it away in a rainy day fund, maybe to cover maternity leave in the future, maybe to provide a pension fund for the future. What the government is proposing to do is tax those corporations' earnings that have already been taxed at the corporate tax rate, and tax it at 73%. That would be the net tax rate—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Ed Fast: Please, no heckling from the NDP. I have time for an answer, and the guy behind me is heckling like crazy because he does not understand the tax act and he has not read the reforms that the Liberal government is bringing forward.

I have spoken to tax specialists. In fact, just last week, at a round table in Mission, British Columbia, a friend of mine who is a very good tax consultant in Abbotsford confirmed that under the Liberal tax proposals, small businesses will pay up to 73% tax.

I should not be surprised that the NDP does not get that, because it has never gotten small business.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday the commissioner released a report with regard to how the current government is doing on the environment in terms of climate change. It got a failing grade. The commissioner was not all that impressed. I am wondering if the hon. member can comment on that.

Government Orders

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has not been sleeping well this week, because the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development delivered a scathing report, a damning indictment, of the present Liberal government's performance on the environment in meeting its greenhouse gas emission goals and meeting its goals to make sure Canadians adapt to climate change. It just was not happening, so it got a failing grade. That should be pretty embarrassing to the Prime Minister and his government.

• (1230)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-57.

According to the world-renowned economic theorist, Jeremy Rifkin, "Facing the prospect of a second collapse of the global economy, humanity is desperate for a sustainable economic game plan to take us into the future."

Rifkin suggests that Internet technology and renewable energy are merging to create a powerful third industrial revolution. He asks us to imagine hundreds of millions of people producing their own green energy in their homes, offices, and factories, and sharing it with each other in an energy Internet, just like we now create and share information online.

Why do I mention Jeremy Rifkin in discussing Bill C-57?

His foresight in naming this period we have entered as the third industrial revolution was a constant theme at the recent World Economic Forum's Sustainable Development Impact Summit during Climate Week in New York City. I was fortunate to participate at the invitation of the environment minister.

The workshop themes focused on the priorities to move us forward into this revolution in thinking and action, including accelerating financing for global energy conversion, strengthening partnerships for a sustainable future, transforming skills, and empowering citizens, and women in particular. These dialogues were all centred on the common recognition of the need to expedite action on the 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the UN in September 2015.

Unlike the previous iteration of sustainable development forged in the 1987 Brundtland report, this new agreement, called "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", recommended "bold and transformative steps...to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path."

There is a rapidly growing global recognition of the need for much broader considerations in the decisions we make about our future, including in developing policies and programs. These UN goals reflect the need to consider not only environmental but also social and economic considerations in seeking sustainability.

We require political will to make this shift, and as former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore has aptly shared, "Political will is a renewable resource." As my new leader has said, there is hope for change.

In 2016, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development recognized the need to revisit Canadian law and policy on sustainable development. It undertook a study of

the Federal Sustainable Development Act and submitted to the House a report with recommendations to update and strengthen Canadian law in directions that could better deliver these revised goals for sustainability.

Where are we at in Canada today?

By way of background, in 1995 the federal government created the position of the commissioner for environment and sustainable development within the Office of the Auditor General, and charged her with responsibility for providing sustainable development monitoring and reporting on the progress of category I departments towards sustainable development, which is a continually evolving concept based on the integration of social, economic, and environmental concerns.

In 1999, the federal cabinet then issued the cabinet directive on the environmental assessment of policy, plan and program proposals, supported by a series of guidelines obligating each minister to ensure that their departmental policies, plans, and programs were consistent with the government's broad environmental objectives and sustainable development goals. These must be contained in reports to ministers and the cabinet. The directive also requires the public reporting on the extent and results of strategic environmental assessments. Interestingly, the directive makes mandatory a gender lens, but an environmental assessment of proposed policies and programs is not mandatory.

That said, it is one step to issue a directive, but another to take action to ensure that it is complied with. Disappointingly, repeated audits by the commissioner over the past decade have reported significant failures in both the delivery of the departmental sustainable development strategies and compliance with the cabinet directive.

What does the current Federal Sustainable Development Act provide, and how well has the government succeeded in delivering useful results?

The current act was forged from an almost complete rewrite of a private member's bill that originally proposed the creation of a national sustainable development strategy; required short, medium and long-term targets to dramatically accelerate the elimination of all environmental problems, from a cap on emissions to penalties for non-compliance, to full cost accounting and the implementation of regulations; and the creation of a commissioner independent of the Office of the Auditor General, a proposal that captured considerable support at the time.

Government Orders

•(1235)

The actual Federal Sustainable Development Act provides a legal framework for developing and implementing a federal sustainable development strategy based on the precautionary principle, with goals and targets. The act is framed in the basic principle that sustainable development is based on the ecologically efficient use of natural, social, and economic resources and the need to integrate all of those factors in decision-making. It calls for a committee in the Privy Council Office to provide oversight. It establishes a sustainable development office within the Department of the Environment that is mandated to develop and maintain systems to monitor progress in implementing the federal sustainable development strategy and to report every three years on progress in that regard. It then establishes a sustainable development advisory council chaired by the Minister of Environment. There are currently no per diems for council members, as it was a private member's bill. The act further specifies the departments and agencies that are obligated to prepare sustainable development strategies. Finally, it requires that all performance-based contracts must adhere to the strategies.

In testifying at committee, the commissioner described this approach as more of a federal environmental strategy than a sustainable development act. She observed that the strategies produced to date have focused more on the environment alone, as opposed to the broader environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainable development. In her view, clearly reflective of the 2015 UN goals, "Practically speaking, sustainable development means thinking about how decisions can affect the economy, society, the environment, and the well-being of future generations."

Again, as noted, the commissioner has repeatedly reported that the majority of departments and agencies have failed to adequately comply with the cabinet directive. In her 2015 audit, she reported that only five out of more than 1,700 proposals submitted to ministers provided the required environmental report. She also reported that less than 50% of proposals to cabinet filed the necessary reports.

Her report released just this week offers a similarly dismal assessment, with 80% of the departments and agencies she audited failing to deliver the required assessment. She reported that neither the Privy Council Office nor Treasury Board is seeking assurances that the strategic environmental assessment is completed. She also reported that five out of six entities audited failed to even apply the directive.

What recommendations did the committee make to improve sustainable development assessments? Following a review of the act and the results delivered, it recommended a number of substantive reforms, including expanding the factors to be considered in the sustainable development strategies; requiring a whole-of-government approach, consistent with the recommendation of the commissioner; requiring comprehensive engagement of all central government agencies, not just Environment Canada; referencing key sustainable development principles as the basis of any strategies; charging all parliamentary committees with responsibility to review the strategies; requiring all committees to review progress reports from the commissioner; making specific reference in the law to Canada's international commitments; and specifying short, medium,

and long-term goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Does Bill C-57 respond to these criticisms and recommendations? Regrettably, while some changes are proposed in Bill C-57 to improve the act, it contains few of the recommended substantive reforms. The bill does propose additional principles to be added to guide development of any sustainable development strategy, although it lacks reference to important commitments, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and environmental justice principles.

Responsibility for leading the development and monitoring of the strategies remains unchanged, and is still vested in an official within the Department of the Environment appointed by and reporting to the environment minister. That official is to report on the progress of the Government of Canada, but the official's current role appears minimally changed by the bill.

The reports are still only referred to the environment committee. It not clear how that will deliver the revised purpose of accountability to Parliament or deliver coordinated action across the government to advance sustainable development. The committee recommended that these reports go to all of the committees, since sustainable development affects the whole of government.

•(1240)

While the Treasury Board is granted a discretionary power to establish policies and directives, it is limited to environmental reports, not the full 17 sustainable development goals recommended by the commissioner. The minister's advisory committee may now be paid honoraria, but all members are chosen by the minister, and are not self-selected, which will raise concerns on the part of many in the community.

The act does now require time frames for each target. Based on the most recent report by the commissioner, and absent more centralized oversight entrenching a more whole-of-government commitment, there can be little confidence there will be improved accountability or action for embracing the sustainable development goals. The facade of the government may be painted green, but the internal machinery regrettably will remain entrenched in outdated thinking until reforms are made to lead us into this third industrial revolution for a transformed planet.

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I would like to share that I do find hope elsewhere. I find hope in the change-makers who are activating a global network of social entrepreneurs, innovators, business leaders, policy-makers, and activists to build an “everyone a changemaker” world. This award-based competition is aimed at mobilizing key change-makers and change-maker institutions to develop and scale the most innovative solutions. The challenge is designed in a way to facilitate the creation of innovators who can work together to scale the best solutions. Participating institutions are encouraged to field “change teams” as participants, pooling the perspectives of, for example, students, faculty, and administrators to co-design solutions. Individual innovators are encouraged to connect and collaborate on solutions. Collectively, these teams become part of a broader community of practice, supported through tools such as peer reviews, stories, hangouts, and physical meet-ups designed to inspire, support, and inform the implementation and scaling of leading ideas.

I have been inspired by the efforts of Alberta change-makers taking concrete action to meet sustainable development goals. For example, Desa Crow Chief of the Siksika, as a change-maker, is hoping to hold an indigenous environmental summit to promote clean energy transition and environmental rights for first nations. Also, at the University of Alberta, the CODER project will provide open data access on renewable energy. I am inspired by these youth, as I am sure the minister is, many of whom we had the opportunity to meet in New York City and in Canada. Therein I find hope. I wish I were more hopeful in regard to this new statute, but I look forward to discussion and potential amendments at committee.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for all of her hard work and support for action on climate change and sustainable development.

Here, I am also thinking of our colleague, who sadly is deceased, Arnold Chan, who talked about the importance of civility, working together, and engaging. I think Bill C-57 is an example of the very hard work of the committee that came together with a unanimous report. I am very pleased to be working with parliamentarians from all parties to make sure that we move forward to a more sustainable future for our kids.

I want to give a shout-out also to members of my department who have worked very hard on this, and those across the government who support the goals of sustainable development, as well as to the change-makers whom the member opposite referenced. There are young people around the world who are really pushing for a more sustainable future, because it is their future. We have worked with indigenous peoples and all sorts of stakeholders who provided input, as well as other Canadians.

I am very happy that we have support for this bill. We will certainly be considering all amendments to strengthen it at committee. I think this fits very well with what we are trying to do as a government. We know that we need to move to a more sustainable future, and we need to do it in a thoughtful and practical way. We need to be transparent and to be held accountable, and we need to be doing it with all Canadians and ensuring that the economy and the environment go together. This is a very important step.

●(1245)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard a question in there. However, I can only then presume that the minister agrees with the various issues I raised.

I am convinced that the minister cares about sustainable development. I am unaware if she fought for a more whole-of-government approach behind the scenes on holding the various departments and agencies accountable. Perhaps she did not win in that area. It is one area where I hope to be moving forward at committee to strengthen the bill so that the minister can ensure that all of her colleagues within cabinet actually share the same responsibility. Whether that scale of amendment will be allowed, we will wait and see. I look forward to working with her officials as we move forward to strengthen the act at committee.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Guelph.

Today I am going to speak to how our government's priorities align with international sustainable development objectives. I will begin by providing an overview of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and what it means for sustainable development in both Canada and worldwide. I will then discuss how our government is supporting the implementation of the agenda for sustainable development goals, as well as a few of the contributions being made by other governments and organizations across Canada.

The United Nations has been at the forefront of the political discourse on sustainable development since the Brundtland report in 1987.

In September 2015, the next step in the evolution of sustainable development arrived when the world agreed to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, including 17 sustainable development goals. The 2030 agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. In adopting the 2030 agenda, all UN member states have pledged to leave no one behind.

The sustainable development goals, or SDGs, have been established as the global framework for tackling common economic, social, and environmental challenges. The goals apply equally to developing and developed countries, are integrated with each other, and the achievement of some cannot be made without the achievement of others. For instance, achievement of the clean water and sanitation goal would help provide people with access to clean water and ensure that waste water is properly treated. This would help to support the achievement of the zero-hunger goal by providing clean water to grow food, and the achievement of the good-health and well-being goal, by eliminating some sources of disease.

Government Orders

Our government is committed to supporting the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and the vision that Canada is one of the greatest countries in the world. Unsurprisingly, the Government of Canada's priorities and programs are well aligned with the goals and targets of the 2030 agenda. For example, we are committed to moving to a low-carbon economy, ensuring that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand, and ensuring that all Canadians have access to clean drinking water and safe and healthy food.

As we work to deliver on our priorities, we continue to consult and engage Canadians to ensure their perspectives are heard and taken into account. In 2016, our government undertook an extensive consultation process to review our international assistance policy. Canadians showed strong support for the themes and issues addressed by the sustainable development goals. They wanted to support the health and rights of women and children to ensure peace and security, promote clean economic growth and climate change, and protect governance, pluralism, diversity, and human rights.

Responding to this consultation, Canada's feminist international assistance policy supports targeted investments, partnerships, innovation, and advocacy efforts, with the greatest potential to close gender gaps and improve everyone's chance for success. As we implement the policy, we will strengthen our priorities through work in areas such as gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, human dignity, and growth that works for everyone.

Domestically, we have already begun to respond to the challenge of the 2030 agenda and the SDGs through the 2016 to 2019 federal sustainable development strategy, or FSDS, our plan to promote clean growth, ensure healthy ecosystems, and build safe, secure, and sustainable communities over the next three years. The strategy presents 13 aspirational goals that are a Canadian reflection of the SDGs of the 2030 agenda, with a focus on their environmental dimensions. Our goals are supported by medium-term targets, short-term milestones, and clear action plans. There are 41 federal departments and agencies that contribute to meeting our targets and advancing our goals.

Our strategy was shaped by input from stakeholders and Canadians, and it recognizes the important role that our partners and all Canadians play in achieving sustainable development. For example, our strategy highlights actions being taken by Canadian organizations that support the FSDS goals and the SDGs. It also presents actions that Canadians can take in their daily lives to help build a more sustainable Canada.

One way in which our strategy responds to consultations as well as global sustainable development priorities is through the inclusion of the goal that all Canadians have access to safe drinking water, and, in particular, that the significant challenges indigenous communities face are addressed. We know that while drinking water in Canada is among the safest in the world, access to safe drinking water remains a challenge in on-reserve first nation communities. Our target to eliminate long-term drinking water advisories in first nation communities directly supports the SDGs of good health and well-being, clean water and sanitation, and reflects our commitment to leaving no one behind.

● (1250)

To further support our commitment to the 2030 agenda and other international initiatives, we introduced a bill in June, Bill C-57, that we are debating today, that would amend the purpose of the Federal Sustainable Development Act. The revised purpose would specify that future strategies respect Canada's domestic and international obligations relating to sustainable development. That includes the SDGs, as well as other agreements and initiatives, such as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the pan-Canadian framework.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I am extremely proud of our government's response to our committee's unanimous 2016 report on the Federal Sustainable Development Act. Bill C-57 is a thoughtful response to our committee's report, and sets the legislative vision to meet our international sustainable development goals through many ways, including domestic actions.

I must also note that while being very supportive of Bill C-57, our committee has learned, through our current study on built heritage in Canada, that our international commitments on ecosystem protection and climate change include provisions relating to protecting cultural heritage. I raise this as an issue and a flag to our government that it might consider an amendment by the committee on environment and sustainable development concerning cultural heritage and our international commitments when this bill gets to committee.

By meeting our commitment to update our strategy on an ongoing basis, we will provide Canadians with a comprehensive picture of our sustainable development commitments and results. Through our first update in June 2017, we reported that a number of short-term milestones set out in the FSDS have already been achieved. For example, the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change has been adopted by first ministers of the federal government and 11 provinces and territories. Canada has ratified the Paris agreement, and Canada's mid-century long-term low-greenhouse gas development strategy has been released.

That initial update also incorporated investments announced in budget 2017 that support the strategy's goals and targets, including increased financing support for Canada's clean technology sector; funding to support research, development, demonstration and adoption of clean technologies; measures to enhance collaboration and establish new ways of measuring success; and new broad-based innovation initiatives.

The 2030 agenda depends on rigorous monitoring and reporting, including voluntary reviews by individual countries through the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development. In support of this global reporting effort, we will present our first voluntary national review in July 2018.

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While the federal government has an important role to play, I want to recognize that we cannot achieve the SDGs alone. The 2030 agenda acknowledges that, along with governments, implementation will involve parliaments, the UN system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business in the private sector, the scientific and academic community, and all citizens.

In Canada, organizations such as other governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations have already begun to take action. For example, the Global Compact Network Canada has undertaken a survey of their members' SDG priorities and actions. They identified climate action, no poverty, decent work and economic growth, sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption and production as the most important SDGs for Canada, goals that align very well with our government's priorities.

As a proud British Columbian, I also want to highlight the work of the City of Vancouver. In particular, Vancouver's greenest city action plan and healthy city strategy include goals and targets that align with the SDGs. For instance, Vancouver has set a goal to have the best drinking water of any city in the world, which aligns with the clean water and sanitation principle of the SDGs. Vancouver has also established the goal of a healthy, just, and sustainable food system, targeting an increase in local food production. The city has seen an increase of 42% of neighbourhood food assets in Vancouver since 2010. This directly contributes to the sustainable development goal to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

In conclusion, the SDGs represent a renewed global commitment to sustainable development that our government has already begun to respond to through the development and implementation of the FSDS and the feminist international assistance policy. Going forward, we will contribute to the follow-up and review of the SDGs, including through the voluntary national review process.

• (1255)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the environment commissioner issued a series of reports outlining that the Liberals have failed to live up to their commitments to protect the environment, and their lack of leadership.

Would the member for Cloverdale—Langley City support a new study at committee outlining how Canada can do better in meeting its emissions targets?

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, our government is doing a fantastic job through the agenda we have put forward. We inherited a government that was devoid of any attention to climate issues. We are working, through legislation such as Bill C-57, to address the need for Canadian leadership on sustainable development strategies. I am very proud of this bill and believe that it will move us well along the way to addressing the concerns that the commissioner of environment has raised in her recent reports.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member just said that the government has done a fantastic job on the issue, but I beg to differ. The commissioner's report actually states:

The findings presented in our fall 2017 reports show that in two important areas—reducing greenhouse gases and adapting to the impacts of climate change—the federal government has yet to do much of the hard work that is required to bring

about this fundamental shift. For example, instead of developing a detailed action plan to reach the 2020 target for reducing emissions, the government changed its focus to the 2030 target. In addition, the government did not pursue a number of greenhouse gas regulations, thereby losing opportunities to achieve real reductions in emissions.

I could go on, but these are just some of the highlights that the commissioner pointed out around the lack of action from the government.

We have Bill C-57, where the government says it will take a whole-of-government approach but does not. In fact, it does not engage all of the central government agencies in the development and implementation of the federal sustainable development strategy.

How can the government think that this is going to address the issues at hand, especially in light of the commissioner's reports?

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the excellent work that the commissioner of the environment does on her audits. It provides great information for our government to be able to move forward and address the concerns that have been raised.

As I noted, Bill C-57 takes the work of the committee that I was part of and incorporates needed changes into legislation. It will set the framework for our government to move forward. It is very much setting a leadership position for our government. I remain very proud of this legislation and the changes we will see.

I would also like to comment that the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development has on notice, a potential study that we will be discussing in the near future on climate change. Given the great relationship we have had with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I believe we will be able to come up with wonderful recommendations for her consideration. That will also help move our government's agenda forward.

• (1300)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member has spent many years in the federal civil service. I am wondering whether he can tell us what that experience brings to the table in terms of this new legislation, and how it might affect the civil service.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, flowing from the Federal Sustainable Development Act are the sustainable development strategies that each department needs to do. As the minister noted in her comments this morning, the scope of the departments covered by that is being expanded under these changes. It is a way of helping departments focus on how they will contribute to sustainable development. This is a great way of encouraging a greater number of government organizations to contribute to sustainability in our country.

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Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to have an opportunity to address my hon. colleagues in support of this new legislation.

I would like to speak to the principles of sustainable development in Bill C-57 and how these would help to advance the government's commitment to a clean environment and a strong economy.

Guelph has a long history of enacting sustainable development policies. Personally, I worked for five years on the mayor's task force for sustainability and have since focused my goals in the House around the triple bottom-line approach in balancing economic, environmental, and social development. Guelph is a living monument to our government's mantra that we cannot separate success in the environment and success in the economy. They are, in fact, one and the same. Guelph is known for its economic success, including low unemployment and a rapid growth in our economy. In fact, Guelph is one of the fastest-growing economies in Canada, but it is also one of the most environmentally conscious. We have the highest rates of waste diversion from landfills, at 68%. We have the lowest water consumption per capita, with a goal of reaching Norway's level. As we grow our population by 50%, we are looking to reduce our electrical consumption by the same amount so that we do not require more power for the 50% more people coming in.

Another key objective of Bill C-57 is poverty reduction. Guelph is actively working to eliminate poverty, with a focus on homelessness and mental health. Currently, the Guelph and Wellington task force for poverty elimination is a shining example of our community's dedication to eliminate poverty in our community. Its three-year strategic plan, from 2014 to 2017, addresses issues like food and income security, housing, and dental health. These social objectives are essential to sustainable development, as was acknowledged by the UN in the early 1980s. It all connects.

Let me continue with some global history. In 1983, the United Nations General Assembly established the World Commission on Environment and Development. It was chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Brundtland, and in 1987 the Brundtland commission published its report, "Our Common Future", known as the Brundtland report. That report put sustainable development squarely on the global agenda. In its own words, "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." That is often referred to as the standard definition of sustainable development. Indeed, that is how sustainable development is defined in our current Federal Sustainable Development Act.

The Brundtland report paved the way for an unprecedented 1992 United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro, better known as The Earth Summit. I want to make a special point of noting that it was a very great, distinguished Canada who helped to organize that event, the late Maurice Strong. The Earth Summit brought together more countries and heads of state than any previous event. It also established enduring and lasting mechanisms for international co-operation, following through on Gro Harlem Brundtland's vision of a sustainable future. Among these important agreements were the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity, and the development of the Commission on Sustainable

Development. Canada was there. We supported the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

We have championed sustainable development since then. Following the Rio summit, in 1995, Canada became one of the first countries in the world to create a commissioner for sustainable development. Since 1997, government departments have been required to produce sustainable development strategies in compliance with the 1995 amendments to the Auditor General Act. In 2008, under the leadership of the Hon. John Godfrey, his private member's bill, Bill C-474, passed and became law as the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

●(1305)

The act provides the legal framework for developing and implementing a federal sustainable development strategy every three years. It also requires 26 departments and agencies to prepare their own sustainable development strategies that comply and contribute to the overall federal strategy.

The year 2015 was a watershed year. In September, Canada was among 193 countries to adopt the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The 2030 agenda sets out a global framework of action over the next decade and a half for people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership; to eradicate poverty; and to leave no one behind. The 17 sustainable development goals and 169 associated targets build on the previous millennium development goals. They are universally applicable and fully integrate the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

In December 2015, Canada was among the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which adopted the historic Paris Agreement.

The Federal Sustainable Development Act is part of the legacy that began with the Brundtland report and earth summit and is still relevant today as we advance the government's commitment to a clean environment and a strong economy. It provides the framework to develop and implement the federal sustainable development strategy, the complete guide to the Government of Canada's environmental sustainability priorities.

The most recent strategy, for the period 2016-19, was tabled in the House on October 6, 2016. It sets out 13 long-term aspirational goals. In response to a recommendation of the standing committee, the strategy's goals are a Canadian reflection of the United Nations' sustainable development goals, with a focus on their environmental dimensions.

Today I would like to take a few minutes to tell my colleagues about the principles we are proposing in Bill C-57, principles this government believes will strengthen the Federal Sustainable Development Act. I also want to acknowledge the important work of our colleagues on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, who, in their June 2016 report, highlighted the importance of modernizing our sustainable development principles.

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Bill C-57 proposes to include the following principles: intergenerational equity, polluter pays, internalization of costs, openness and transparency, involving indigenous peoples' collaboration, and results and delivery.

The principle of intergenerational equity is the essence of sustainable development. It is the recognition that the decisions we make are not just about today and about us but also about the future and those who will be here after us. The Brundtland report set out the following principle on intergenerational equity: "States shall conserve and use the environment and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations."

It was also recommended in the standing committee's June 2016 report that the principle of polluter pays be adopted, that we look at a new way of thinking, and that sustainable economic growth take into account the damages imposed on the environment.

Polluter pays means that those who generate pollution should bear the cost of having created pollution. Internalization of costs means that goods and services should reflect all the costs they generate for society, from their design to their consumption to their final disposal. The principles of openness and transparency are also intertwined with the purpose of the Federal Sustainable Development Act, ensuring that decision-making related to sustainable development is more transparent and is subject to accountability to Parliament.

That is why Bill C-57 proposes a principle on involving all peoples and being transparent to all peoples. I also note that the government's commitment is supported by provisions in the act to ensure and expand aboriginal representation on the Sustainable Development Advisory Council.

Finally, the principles we set out in Bill C-57 reaffirm that we are up to the challenge. Canada, like Guelph, is ready to seize the opportunities before us and to be bold. Sustainable development means growing a diversified, low-carbon economy while reducing emissions, generating good jobs for Canadians, and having a society we can all be proud of.

• (1310)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government enacted the Federal Sustainable Development Act in 2008 as the result of a Liberal member's private bill, and we invested in clean technology. The Conservative government reduced greenhouse gases in transportation and coal-fired electricity. These were meaningful, realistic reductions to protect the environment and work with the economy.

This week, the Auditor General reported that the Liberal government has failed dismally. How does the member think Bill C-57 would improve the Liberal government's dismal record to date?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I really enjoy having the hon. member on the industry committee. He has been contributing there, as he is today in the House.

When we had our debates during the campaign, I remember that there was always a part when the Conservative candidate mentioned its great environmental record, and that is when the crowd groaned. I have to introduce that and imagine the crowd groaning today. The greenhouse gas reductions happened during the worst economic time Canada had seen since the Great Depression. It may have had

something to do with consumption dropping with the economy, which is more to the point.

We are looking at how we enact legislation and how we work with our partners in the provinces and municipalities to drive our plan forward and get real results. It is early in the game, but we know we are going to get there.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in light of the work that has been done by the standing committee the member referenced in his speech, I am wondering if the member is at all concerned, because Bill C-57's amendments do not completely meet the recommendations of the committee. As a matter of fact, the government put forward some recommendations that were not raised at the committee, which is a concern. I am wondering in particular if the member would like to expand on why it might be that the committee was not asked to weigh in and make recommendations when we are looking at the legal framework for a federal sustainable development strategy.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I have not been involved with the committee directly, but the work of committees comes from the committee to the government. The government looks at the priorities of the whole of government, and works with the recommendations from committees to engage the whole of government. Sometimes all the recommendations are taken. Sometimes not all the recommendations are taken, based on how they fit in with the whole-of-government approach.

I might also say that it is early in the game. We have taken the most important priorities from the committee to move forward and work with our provincial and municipal counterparts to engage and get the goals we want to achieve.

• (1315)

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as someone who sits on the environment and sustainable development committee, I can say how pleased I am with the government's response. Many of our recommendations made it into the legislation, and many of the ones that are not directly in the legislation will be actioned through other means, so I think the government has responded very appropriately.

How does the member feel his community will benefit from Bill C-57 and the legislation that is going forward?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, that is a tough question, and I really appreciate the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for challenging me on that. As I mentioned, our community has a sustainable development plan already. Now we are moving into the action items that will align with the federal plan and then will bring the province on board so that all three orders of government will work together to achieve Canada's goals together.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-57, an act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act. The bill was partly inspired by a 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, which I belonged to at the time of the report's release. I am pleased to have this opportunity to offer further input on this matter.

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The Conservatives have long supported sustainable development strategies. Indeed, we supported the Federal Sustainable Development Act in 2008. It makes sense that economic, social and environmental priorities be advanced through an integrated whole-of-government approach. We cannot advance one of these priorities while ignoring the others. Canadians expect that parliamentarians consider all three priorities when designing policy and legislation. The public needs to be confident that policy has been thoroughly thought out on all three fronts.

Unfortunately, this Liberal government has made little progress in implementing sustainable development strategies, as the 2017 fall reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development made all too clear. I am sure we can all agree that the commissioner is incredibly competent and thorough, and her findings should carry great weight.

The importance of sustainable development is something on which all parties agree, and the government simply needs to make real progress on this file. Given that action is clearly needed, I am pleased the bill takes steps to meet the expectations of Canadians by amending the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

The bill takes a number of noteworthy steps toward improving government transparency and accountability. It greatly expands the number of government agencies and departments subject to the federal sustainable development strategy, from 26 to 90 departments. If we are launching a whole-of-government approach, expanding the number of departments subject to the strategy obviously makes sense.

It would also mandate that departments adhere to a reporting and progress schedule. This is a fundamentally sound practice. It would ensure we would have a means through which to assess what action departments were taking to meet their objectives. By assessing this action on a whole-of-government basis, we will get a better sense of whether targets are being met in a meaningful way. In the past, we have had issues with non-compliance. By empowering the Treasury Board to establish policies or issue directives to ensure compliance with the new reporting requirements, government accountability will hopefully be improved.

With that said, I do have some concerns with regard to how the departments and agencies prepare and report their sustainable development strategies. As I said, reporting on progress makes sense.

We heard from witnesses in committee that Germany had achieved success with an annual reporting requirement. Reporting on progress ensures that if a strategy is not working, there is an opportunity to make revisions to get back on track. However, it is also important that departments and agencies not be subjected to onerous requirements and red tape. The requirements should not merely add red tape to an already enormous and complex bureaucratic organization.

A key benefit of adopting a whole-of-government approach is efficiency and the elimination of waste. The specific reporting requirements should be carefully crafted so as to avoid bogging down the departments in more red tape. If government departments and agencies are allocating time and resources to preparing reports

instead of actually taking action on sustainable development, then the bill will not have its desired effects. It simply will be a big waste of time. A firm sense of what the considerable reporting requirements in the bill will actually accomplish is also very important. Reporting can be an effective strategy to improve accountability, but only if it is well implemented. I hope the government will continue to carefully review the successes and failures of other jurisdictions as the bill's legislative processes unfolds.

• (1320)

Some of the jurisdictions we heard about took years to get this right. The government needs to be very careful and think this through. If it does not, the bill will serve as nothing more than a just another cautionary tale for other jurisdictions on what not to do.

With regard to how the departments prepare their sustainable development strategies, it is important that they not do so in a silo. Of course, the unique mandate of each respective department will mean that their strategies vary. I am not saying that we can develop a government-wide, one-size-fits-all plan, however, 90 departments and agencies will now be subject to the strategy. It would be hugely wasteful for departments to be individually developing strategies that overlap. Duplication simply must be avoided for this whole-of-government approach to actually improve efficiency.

To that end, it is vital that departments communicate with one another as they prepare their respective strategies. Along with the top-down direction from the centre, this strategy needs horizontal, government-wide coordination. A broad template strategy would be a common sense way of doing this. That way, it can be tweaked by each department to accommodate their specific needs, but would avoid departments wasting time and resources preparing plans in individual silos. The minister should provide clear leadership in developing the government-wide framework. Sorry, according to commissioner's audit, this is missing.

Overall, a whole-of-government approach to sustainable development principles is an important means of protecting the social, economic, and environmental well-being of Canadians. However, it must not be allowed to degenerate into a costly bureaucratic nightmare.

I also have some misgivings about the remuneration of the Sustainable Development Advisory Council. Compensating out-of-pocket expenses is one thing, but our committee's unanimous report did not call for the advisory council to receive the compensation now being proposed. I am not sure what the Liberals' basis for introducing remuneration is. It was not in our report, because we felt it should not happen. Our committee conducted a thorough study on this matter. As I noted, we heard about the failures in many other jurisdictions. I hope the government has good reason for deviating from the findings on this point.

This is an important file on which all parties want action. At its best, the bill could offer an efficient, cost effective way of reaching sustainable development objectives. Introducing remuneration for advisory council members may do the opposite as far as cost-effectiveness. Further, it is important that Canadians can have confidence that the advisory council is offering the minister independent and objective advice. This is crucial. It cannot become tied to any minister or department. Its independence needs to be beyond question. The council members should not be remunerated.

Our committee's report also emphasized the importance of engaging the Canadian public on sustainable development. As one witness put it, "You'll not regulate yourself into sustainable development. Sustainable development is more than just regulation." Many Canadians are already taking incredible action. My motion, Motion No. 108, aims to recognize farmers and ranchers as stewards of the environment and conservationists. They are doing their part to develop their land and produce our food sustainably. Beyond the provisions outlined in the bill, the government should remember that it is everyday Canadians who are making a huge difference. They should be encouraged to do so. Open, informative dialogue about sustainable development is very necessary.

• (1325)

While I intend to support the bill, I hope the government will take action to address the concerns I have raised today. The stakes are too high on this file to continue to make no progress. Canadians expect a federal sustainability development strategy that works.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to express my frustration not only with the bill, but with this debate today. We are in an urgent climate crisis. I live in a province that has lost 5% of our annual allowable cut of forest to forest fires this summer. We have seen extreme weather events. We have seen floods. We have seen the report from the Commissioner on Environment and Sustainable Development, which said that the government had absolutely failed to address the crisis of climate change.

Of course I am in favour of sustainable development, but what I am really in favour of is the House of Commons getting down to work on the things we need to meet that climate crisis. Where is the plan to shift away from fossil fuels and to project the jobs of those workers who will have to transition to new work?

Where is the plan to shift transportation over to electricity from fossil fuels? I am in a privileged position. I gave up my gas car nearly five years ago. The technology is there. We can do this.

Where is the plan to shift to geothermal for space heating? The technology is there, and it uses some of the same skills used in the oil industry.

Where is the plan to start making the transitions we need? I have not heard a thing from the Conservatives or the Liberals about the real actions we need to meet the climate crisis we face in our country.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, there is a plan, and the commissioner recognized that. The commissioner said that it was the implementation of that plan that needed to be done.

Therefore, there is a plan, but it would involve all 90 departments, government as a whole. If the government implements the plan, we

will see action. However, that is where it has to move, and it has not happened so far. Now we need to see if the government will do that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having heard the previous comment and response, I guess the plan would be \$180 billion-plus in infrastructure investment, including support for the largest conversion from diesel rail to electric rail in the world going on right now in Ontario, and support for a massive investment in public transit. As well, we have the ocean protection plan. We have made significant investments to ensure the environmental standards for resource development are sustainable, but are also positive for the environment. We have had comprehensive and profound engagement with indigenous communities right across the country as we roll that out. We have signed on to the Paris accord and the movement toward greenhouse gas reduction.

As we do all of this, as we steward the economy and allow it to grow and create record growth, with the lowering of unemployment right across the country, as we grow the economy and have an impact on the new technology, the new systems, and the new infrastructure required to meet the new century's challenges, is that not exactly why the party opposite is supporting this bill?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, yes, we support it. Yes, there is a plan, but it needs leadership to carry it out. As the commissioner said, that leadership needs to step forward to make this plan happen. This is what we are waiting to see.

We support the plan, but we are looking for leadership to get something going.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[English]

PARKS CANADA AGENCY ACT

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC) moved that Bill C-315, An Act to amend the Parks Canada Agency Act (Conservation of National Historic Sites Account), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to speak in support of Bill C-315, which is an act to amend the Parks Canada Agency Act with regard to the conservation of national historic sites account.

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I would like to spend my time today discussing the purpose of this bill and its value in terms of promoting Canada's history, culture, and beautiful scenery, not only to our own citizens but to the entire world.

Bill C-315 proposes the establishment of an account to which all donated funds will be attributed when the donor indicates they want the funds to be used for the conservation of a given site. The interest of this account would be spent only on the preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of the specified heritage site, thus assuring the donor that their money would be put to good use in protecting the site they know and love.

Canada is very fortunate not only to be the home of many federally, provincially, and locally recognized national historic sites, but also to have a number of internationally recognized UNESCO world heritage sites, including the world-famous Rideau Canal. Although those who reside in Ottawa probably know the Rideau Canal as the home of Winterlude and the world's longest outdoor skating rink, its history is much richer than that. That history is often lost on those who have never truly visited the site.

Construction on the canal began in 1828. Its purpose was to create an alternative military supply route from Montreal to the Great Lakes. The canal officially opened in 1832, stretching from Lake Ontario to Ottawa through the wilderness of eastern Ontario. In fact, almost the entire northern boundary of my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes is the Rideau Canal. At the time, the Rideau Canal consisted of 47 locks, fortified lockmasters' houses, and blockhouses, representing an incredible feat of engineering for the time that employed countless people.

Among the contractors who worked on the canal and built some of its most impressive sites was John Redpath, the founder of Redpath Sugar, a proud Canadian corporation that recently announced its support for Bill C-315 as a means of promoting donations from its organization and others like it.

Following the canal's completion, many small settlements developed into thriving communities along its banks. Bytown, which was later renamed Ottawa, was set up as the construction headquarters. Clearly it continued to grow long after construction was completed, to become the Ottawa we know today.

Following World War I, the canal lost its industrial and commercial purpose and became a waterway for recreational vessels, an extremely popular pastime among both Canadian and American pleasure craft operators today. In 2000, the Rideau Canal obtained a heritage river designation. Then, in 2007, the canal was designated a UNESCO world heritage site, demonstrating its importance on the international stage.

That is the kind of story Canada should be promoting, a story that showcases the hard work and ingenuity that led to the great country we have become.

Parks Canada currently administers 171 federally recognized national historic sites and defines over 970 more as being historically significant. With such a large responsibility resting on this organization, it is crucial that Canadians be able to help in any way possible. In fact, in my own riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, we are fortunate to have many sites that

have helped define the development of the area and continue to attract people to reflect on our history and achievements, which in turn is a great boost to our local economies.

Our many national historic sites across Canada provide us and visitors with leisure, education, beauty, and a unique experience that can never be recreated. Like many precious things, they are a rare wonder and deserve to be promoted and protected with the utmost care. Unlike natural attractions, our historic structures at these heritage sites are made of bricks and mortar and timber, and will crumble and rot with time. They require a great amount of care in reflection of the hard work and historic struggles that led to their construction. Once they are gone, no amount of money or goodwill could possibly bring them back.

Therefore, we are tasked with ensuring they remain in good repair so that future generations can look back on Canada's great history just as we do today. Many of our citizens have fond memories attached to these locations—days out with family, getting back to their roots, and in some cases, personal stories—that will forever be tied to the important historic moments that took place there.

• (1335)

Along the Rideau waterway, for example, are many families who can trace their origins to the construction of the canal. With happy thoughts and generous hearts, these kind individuals are often eager to give donations, with the hope that their money will keep the place that they love in pristine shape for years to come. That type of generosity should be encouraged, as Canadians have so few opportunities to step forward and take stewardship of their own history.

Although visiting a national historic site might allow an individual to learn and experience the history that took place there, encouraging donations helps Canadians to understand the site as part of their personal history and national identity. While any donation made to Parks Canada is put to good use, donors should be assured that their donations will maintain the national historic site that bears personal significance to them. The creation of a legacy fund for the conservation of such sites would not only provide that assurance but also encourage further donations from Canadians and international visitors alike. This extra funding would aid Parks Canada in paying for the restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation of buildings, forts, and other historic structures that our country has to offer.

Parks Canada has done an exemplary job of fulfilling its mandate of protecting and presenting nationally significant natural and cultural heritage while fostering public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment in ways that ensure that the site's ecological and commemorative integrity remain intact for present and future generations.

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Although Parks Canada already has protections in place covering the expenditure of donated funds, these regulations are not easily found and are not well known to the public at large. This is troubling, especially given that studies indicate people are more willing to donate to a given cause when they view its organization as being transparent and easily held accountable. They do not want to watch their donation disappear into a void of bureaucracy and want to know that their money will be used for the protection and preservation of the site they have come to love, and not for wages, groundskeeping, and other matters unrelated to the historical significance of the site itself.

Bill C-315 would help Parks Canada create a system that would not only manage donations but also promote further donations in the future. Its current donation management system, while effective in ensuring that money is spent in an ethical manner, does nothing to encourage donations and lacks the easy, well-documented transparency donors desire and deserve. That is what Bill C-315 has to offer.

Despite the number of people who visit our national historic sites each year, Parks Canada receives surprisingly few donations. On a national scale, it received only \$28,000 in 2013 and between 2014 and 2016, the cumulative total annual donations fell by \$30,000. While each of these donations is undoubtedly appreciated, we can do much more, especially given the cost of maintaining, restoring, and rehabilitating our national historic sites. In fact, in 2013, \$10,451,000 was spent on restoration. In 2014, \$9 million was spent, and in 2015, \$7 million was spent.

Surprisingly, these numbers are kept artificially low by the fact that Parks Canada cannot accurately calculate salary and wage expenditures related specifically to the repair and maintenance of national historic sites. With numbers like those, we should be doing everything we can possibly do to raise money and keep our sites in pristine condition. They are priceless to our nation and deserve only the best.

Beyond these direct benefits to the national historic sites and to Canada's national identity, increasing donations and improving the overall appearance of our sites could serve as a significant boost to both national and international tourism. When travelling in Canada, whether from another province or another country, our visitors come for our history and hospitality, not for our famously good weather. In fact, most travellers perceive Canada's strength as a tourist attraction to be our beautiful yet affordable destinations, such as the national historic sites we aim to protect.

If we want Canada to be seen as a valuable destination rather than simply an affordable one, we must ensure that these sites remain in good repair, which can be helped through the creation of the legacy fund outlined in this bill. This would allow us to teach our history, while sharing the diverse culture that makes Canada so unique in the world.

• (1340)

Encouraging tourism would not only further benefit the funding of Parks Canada through gate fees and product sales, but also provide support for the approximately 1.7 million jobs supported by the tourism industry each year. What is more, these positions tend to be held by demographics that have had historic troubles in obtaining and maintaining employment. Immigrants, women, and youth are

provided with jobs in a diverse range of fields, such as hospitality, food, and entertainment, often making significantly more than the minimum wage.

In fact, many of these individuals are employed by Parks Canada itself. In its peak season, that department employs approximately 2,100 year-round indeterminate employees, 1,900 indeterminate seasonal employees, and approximately 1,100 students.

What is more, the increasing tourism created through the maintenance of our national historic sites would promote the growth of their surrounding communities by supporting the small businesses that make up the backbone of our tourism industry in Canada. Around 98% of the industry is run by small and medium-size businesses that rely on the patronage of international travellers to keep their doors open. These businesses often work hand in hand with destination marketing organizations that promote international visitors not only to the businesses but also to the national historic sites that make Canada a valuable destination no matter where people are from.

In Canada's 150th anniversary year, we should be more focused than ever on the protection and preservation of the history that makes us who we are today. We should be preserving, rehabilitating, and maintaining our sites as well as we possibly can to ensure that they will continue to stand for another 150 years and far beyond.

By encouraging donations from international visitors and Canadian citizens alike, we not only promote taking stewardship of our own history and national identity but also ensure that the sites will maintain their beauty and integrity for generations to come. At the same time, we are promoting the tourism industry, which employs so many Canadians.

For these reasons, I hope that all members will join me in supporting Bill C-315 for the creation of a national historic sites account.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his commitment to national parks and historic sites and our heritage. May I say in passing that I think he lives in one of the most beautiful parts of this great country—next to Manitoba, of course. I spent many summers in Leeds and Grenville. I have read *Leeds the Lovely* from cover to cover.

This year our government has been very supportive of our national parks and historic sites, but in the previous 10 years of the Harper government, I know we in Manitoba very dramatically experienced the cuts of that government, and one of the reasons that some of our historic sites are in disrepair is the lack of attention to our historic sites during that time.

Riding Mountain National Park went from a four-season park to a three-season park, and the businesses were very dramatically impacted. Does the member agree that some of those reductions in Parks Canada's budgets were in error, and does he believe we are doing the right thing by investing billions in our national parks and historic sites?

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Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's fine comments about the wonderful riding I live in. When our party was in government, I was happy to announce, as an example, \$45 million for the Rideau Canal. There had not been a significant investment in the Rideau Canal in a very long time. I was able to make that announcement, and many of the projects that were part of that announcement are now almost completed. In fairness, the Liberal government did make additional announcements for our national historic sites, which is great.

It is great to see support for our national historic sites on both sides of the aisle, but during the time when we had some issues on the Rideau Canal, it was brought forward to me that people wanted to make some contributions and there was no mechanism to do that. If someone wanted to make a donation to protect environmentally sensitive lands in Canada, one could make a donation and get a tax receipt. They could give that money to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and in some cases it turns lands over to Parks Canada. People can get a tax receipt for that, but not for donations to our national historic sites.

In truth, we found there were many people who wanted to have that process for the Rideau Canal. In fact, we have heard from Redpath that it also wants to make significant contributions to our national historic sites.

I hope that members from all sides will support the bill. It definitely is great for our historic sites across Canada.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was trained as an archaeologist, and as the saying goes, a person cannot know where they are going until they know where they have been. Our historic monuments are extremely important in helping to know where we are going.

I have seen monuments torn down because there was not enough public funding to preserve them all. The Fortress of Louisbourg, for example, is crumbling. I think that a bill like my colleague's could help us to cultivate a philanthropist culture, which is something we do not yet really have in Canada.

I do not really have a question for the member. I just want to tell him that I will support his bill wholeheartedly. I hope that there will be other similar bills that will help us to preserve our historic monuments and that some of them will come from the government and be publicly funded.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Hochelaga for her support of this bill. I do not see this as a bill that should be controversial. This is in no way an attempt to displace federal support for those national historic sites. It is meant to complement that funding and to give people the opportunity to take ownership of those national historic sites and feel pride that they have made a contribution. I am looking forward to the House hopefully passing this bill on to committee so that we can further look at it, and I look forward to it passing through Parliament.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women.

Mr. Scott Reid: I was admiring your non-partisan comments from earlier—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, one second. To the hon. member, I believe an apology is in order. I overheard the word “idiot”, and that is not a parliamentary word.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, an apology would absolutely be in order if I had used the word “idiot”, which I did not do, and I invite you to check that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I apologize for pointing it out.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for clarifying that. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the debate about Bill C-315, An Act to amend the Parks Canada Agency Act (Conservation of National Historic Sites Account).

I want to thank the member of Parliament for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for bringing attention to the important issue of conservation at our national historic sites, with the introduction of Bill C-315. As members know, this bill proposes the creation of a dedicated account for public donations directed to the conservation of national historic sites administered by Parks Canada.

The Government of Canada welcomes the interest and passion that Canadians have for our national historic sites, including any financial support that the public may wish to provide towards the conservation of a particular national historic site. However, the government does not support Bill C-315.

Bill C-315 is motivated by a noble objective, admittedly, supporting the long-term conservation of Canada's national historic sites through the contribution of public donations. However, I am pleased to tell members that the bill is not required, as a mechanism to do this already exists under current legislation.

Indeed, Bill C-315 would serve to duplicate existing legislative authorities under the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Financial Administration Act. These authorities already allow Parks Canada to accept donations and use them in the manner being proposed by Bill C-315. They do so without placing the limits that Bill C-315 proposes to place on the way that Parks Canada can currently accept and manage donations made to these sites.

Canadians take great pride in our history. I expect that this pride will be passionately on display in communities right across this country this year, as we mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

National historic sites are vital assets. They reflect the rich heritage of our nation and provide an opportunity for Canadians to learn more about our diverse history. These treasured places encourage us not only to consider the past, but also to ponder where we stand as a nation and what we strive to become.

As a leader in promoting the conservation of national historic sites, Parks Canada itself manages 171 sites, along with our national parks and national marine conservation areas. Parks Canada is responsible for protecting and presenting nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Many factors contribute to Parks Canada's success as a recognized leader in heritage conservation: a staff of dedicated experts, strategic partnerships with community groups and environmental and heritage organizations, and strong support from visitors and the Government of Canada.

The conservation of national historic sites is a complex, demanding, and never-ending task. Heritage properties, by definition, are old. Many of them face significant threats as they deteriorate over time due to weather and use.

To manage these and other threats, Parks Canada undertakes interventions on national historic sites in accordance with the "Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada", a reference for heritage conservation practice. Whether it is repainting a historic lighthouse or repairing the concrete walls of the Rideau Canal, Parks Canada knows how to protect and present these treasures.

To signal its support of Parks Canada's efforts, the Government of Canada is investing over \$3 billion over five years to improve, restore, and recapitalize Parks Canada's built assets, including national historic sites. Many of these projects foster the conservation of heritage buildings and structures administered by Parks Canada. Through these investments, Parks Canada is protecting and preserving our national historic sites while supporting local economies and contributing to growth in our tourism sector.

In addition, in budget 2016, the Government of Canada signalled its support for conservation projects undertaken on non-federally owned national historic sites, heritage lighthouses and heritage railway stations, and other important assets, by allocating \$20 million over two years to the national cost-sharing program for heritage places administered by Parks Canada.

● (1350)

The legislation now before us, as its title suggests, the conservation of national historic sites account, proposes to establish an account dedicated to conservation activities at national historic sites administered by Parks Canada. The account would be managed by Parks Canada to collect and use donations to fund conservation projects. The bill specifically requires that only the interest generated through the investment of the principal be spent on conservation projects, but the principal itself would remain in the account in perpetuity.

While Parks Canada welcomes all donations as a way to further support the conservation of national historic sites, it is important to note that the amount of annual donations has historically not been substantial enough to adequately support conservation activities. Last year, the public donated a little more than \$56,000 to national historic sites for various activities and programming.

Taken in context with what is proposed under Bill C-315, Parks Canada would have to attract far more donations, perhaps at least a hundred times more, to ensure that the account is cost-effective. As an illustration, investments of principal in conservative financial vehicles would generate only about 2% annually. Even if donors were incredibly generous and donated, let us say, \$5 million under the proposed investment strategy, this would generate about \$100,000 per year in interest. It is a respectable amount of money,

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but when spread over as many as 171 national historic sites across the country, that would not be enough to make a meaningful contribution to conservation efforts.

To date, there is only one instance in which a donation has been made consistent with the terms proposed in Bill C-315. The bequest of Prime Minister Mackenzie King for the ongoing conservation of Laurier House, as per the Laurier House Act, stipulates that an endowment of \$225,000 remain in the account in perpetuity, with its interest spent on the upkeep of the Laurier House National Historic Site. In fiscal years 2014-15 and 2015-16, this account has generated amounts of approximately \$5,000 and \$4,000, respectively.

The existing donation management practices at Parks Canada provide the public with the option to decide whether they wish their donation to spent immediately or to generate interest over time. This is an important choice. Bill C-315, though well-intentioned, which I again commend the hon. member for, unfortunately is duplicative of current practices and in fact would restrict donors' choice.

Parks Canada has demonstrated its leadership and commitment to maintaining the commemorative integrity of Canada's cultural heritage. The policies, programs, and investments currently in place do an admirable job of supporting this objective. Bill C-315 would do nothing to enhance this support, and I encourage my hon. colleagues to vote against the proposed legislation.

● (1355)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to an important private member's bill brought forward by the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Bill C-315 is an act to amend the Parks Canada Agency Act. Its enactment would permit national historic sites operated by Parks Canada to maintain a separate account for donations that would earn interest, which could be used for the restoration and preservation of those sites. Currently, designation as a national historic site by itself does not bring in any monetary funds for the upkeep of the site. Therefore, I am pleased to support the hon. member's motion to introduce one more way for national historic sites to generate revenue to support their upkeep.

However, our effort should not stop there. We need the federal government to partner with all levels of government and the community to make infrastructure and program investments to help protect and preserve these national historic sites. There is no question that national historic sites are places of profound importance to Canada. They bear witness to this nation's history and showcase its diverse cultural traditions.

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Canada is a nation of diverse indigenous peoples and cultures, as well as immigrant communities who have come from all over the world. Each community brings with it its own unique heritage and contributes to the social fabric of Canada in different ways. Entwined in our history is also a history of discrimination faced by many communities in Canada. This discrimination is still very much alive today, evident in the rising number of hate crimes reported. Remembering and honouring the contributions of our diverse communities is one of the most powerful ways we can combat the arguments put forth by those who want to claim Canada for only a portion of the country's population.

In my riding of Vancouver East, there is a national historic site that is a perfect example of the way these sites remind us of both the richness and challenges embedded in Canadian history. Here I refer to Vancouver's historic Chinatown. Vancouver's Chinatown developed as a self-segregated enclave due to discriminatory laws forbidding people of Chinese heritage from living and working elsewhere in the city, as well as the racially motivated violence and hostility experienced by the community outside the enclave.

The distinctive and beautiful buildings in the community, constructed by benevolent associations to help fellow community members, are living monuments to both the struggle and resilience of the community. Many of the historic buildings continue to serve the community today as gathering places, activity spaces, and homes for Chinese Canadian seniors.

In the heart of the community, the Chinatown Memorial Monument stands to honour the Chinese railway workers who helped complete the most treacherous sections of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the World War II veterans who served to keep our country safe. This monument depicts the history of Chinese Canadians in Canada and has profound meaning to our community.

Surrounding it is the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Garden, and the Andy Livingstone Park, all of which are important cultural sites and spaces for the Chinatown community. Historic Chinatown received designation as a national historic site in 2011, and in May 2017 community members and activists celebrated the unveiling of a series of plaques that mark the designation.

However, despite its status as a national historic site, Vancouver's Chinatown is number three on the Heritage Vancouver Society's top 10 watch list of endangered sites in Vancouver and the top 10 endangered places list of the National Trust for Canada. In fact, ongoing immense development pressure is having a direct impact on Chinatown.

The National Trust of Canada has stated:

Relentless development threatens the physical fabric of this nationally significant urban cultural landscape. Design guidelines meant to maintain a "Chinatown look" are often overlooked and building heights have been dramatically increased. At the same time, intense speculation is driving up rents and displacing long-time residents, many of them seniors, who are central to the area's rich cultural identity. Without better control on new development and efforts to sustain local businesses, Chinatown's unique character will be lost.

According to research done by the Chinatown Concern Group, since 2008, Chinatown has seen almost 800 market housing units built and approved, while only 22 non-market housing units were built in the same period.

● (1400)

Many people are worried that Chinatown may lose the rich cultural essence that makes the neighbourhood unique, and the future of Chinatown remains uncertain. As we celebrate Canada's 150, our community is calling on the federal government to not forget that B.C. was able to join Confederation through the labour and sacrifices made by the Chinese railway workers who helped complete the most treacherous sections of the railway. We are also asking the federal government to remember that 2017 is the 70th anniversary of Chinese Canadians winning the right to vote.

Our community would like to see all levels of government work together to recognize the cultural importance of historic Chinatown and to honour the contributions of Chinese Canadians to our nation by protecting the community that was built out of that history.

The government of B.C., a willing partner through its efforts to reconcile historical wrongs and discriminatory laws faced by Chinese Canadians, has created a legacy fund. One of the legacy initiatives is to examine ways to rejuvenate the Chinese society and clan buildings. Clan and society associations were founded in the spirit of kinship. Historically, they served to address the social, political, and financial needs of Chinese Canadians in communities across the country. These buildings would be renovated to better serve the needs of today's community by creating usable community cultural spaces, space for food programming, and affordable housing.

To date, a clan association needs assessment has already been conducted, and a Chinatown senior housing feasibility study has also been completed. The City of Vancouver has committed to restoring clan associations through its Chinese society legacy program. What we need now is a partnership with the federal government so that together we can ensure the success of this meaningful legacy initiative.

When we designate historic Chinatown as a national heritage site, action needs to be taken. Both infrastructure and programming dollars are needed. For our community, historic Chinatown is experienced through both its physical structures and its ambience. When our community thinks about protecting the heritage of Vancouver's Chinatown, we are not just looking for the installation of plaques. We are also envisioning a Chinatown vibrant with aromatic food stalls, similar to the food streets in Hong Kong and China. We are imagining a hub of intergenerational activities, where elders share stories of the past, teach the youth various traditions and the secret of how to make homemade Chinese delicacies in celebration of different cultural festivals, or play mah-jong together.

We are thinking about a community with a capacity to learn from and care for its elders, as many of the residents of Chinatown are seniors now and are living in substandard housing. Some of those seniors are people who still recall the discriminatory practices of the past. We therefore feel very strongly that there must be a commitment to invest in affordable housing and services for seniors and families in and surrounding the Chinatown area.

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Our community is never short on ideas, passion, and effort. Some of the dedicated members of our community even envision Vancouver's Chinatown designated a UNESCO world heritage site, and they have been working hard to try to realize this dream. However, all of this important work cannot be done by the volunteer efforts of individuals alone. All three levels of government must step in to honour the commitment we make when we designate a community as a site that is historically significant to Canada.

Because it is a major historical site and tourist attraction, it is vital that we do everything we can to help revitalize Chinatown in a way that preserves, protects, and reinvigorates the integrity of this historic neighbourhood. I call on the federal government to join all of us in this vision.

• (1405)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-315 is an amazing bill. I really appreciate the fact that it is only two pages long. It goes to what we would often like to see in this place, a straightforward bill whose impacts we can see.

We just heard from the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women that the government will not support the bill. I am deeply disappointed by that. The Liberals say that currently no one is really donating to our national heritage sites, that only \$56,000 was donated to the national heritage sites. That is precisely what we are trying to boost. We are trying to boost those donations. Just because the number is low does not mean that the system does not work. We are trying to make it so that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be. That is the essential point of the bill. I commend my colleague for bringing it forward.

If people donate money to a national heritage site, it goes into a big black hole and the money is spread throughout the country. In my riding I have a national heritage site in the town of Fort Vermillion. If I visited that site and thought that it needed some upkeep, I would be willing to donate some money. When I donate, will the money then show up at the Fort Vermillion site? Officials do not really know, because it goes into a big pot and gets disbursed around the country.

The bill would ensure that if I donated money when visiting a national heritage site in Fort Vermillion, the money that I donated would go to help that site in Fort Vermillion. That is the essence of the bill. Often in this place we speak past each other, which is frustrating, but today I could not believe that the parliamentary secretary totally failed to recognize the fact that the donations would be tied to a particular site.

The parliamentary secretary failed to mention anything about the charitable status that comes with such donations. As I understand, currently no charitable status comes with that. We could make charitable status such that if we gave to a national heritage site, we would get the same tax benefit as if we donated to a local charity. We give charitable status as a tax incentive to encourage donations. If we were to do that for national heritage sites, we might actually encourage donations, and then the \$56,000 a year might grow to be millions of dollars a year. The individuals who are donating to that cause could see the direct effects of their efforts in the particular heritage site they love to visit regularly. They could see their money going to improve the upkeep of that site.

I know that many people in northern Alberta are particularly interested in national heritage sites. Even though in my riding we only have one designated national heritage site, there is a group from northern Alberta called the Friends of Northern Alberta History Society who have put together an app that can help bring awareness about national historic sites. The app uses a map, and if people know of a historic site it can be put into the app and becomes a bit of a wiki, so that people who visit that site can tell their story and what they know about that particular site. I will give it a plug. It is called the History Check app and I know that people in my riding have been working extensively on it. I would especially like to thank Sheila Willis for spearheading that effort, which I hope will become a great success.

I am extremely disappointed to hear that the government is not supporting the bill and that it has failed to grasp the essence of the bill.

• (1410)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to explain why I do not support Bill C-315, an act to amend the Parks Canada Agency Act, Conservation of National Historic Sites Account. Although I respect the apparent goal of Bill C-315, the mechanism it proposes is duplicative of what the government is already able to achieve.

Bill C-315 aims to support the conservation of national historic sites. Without question, this is an honourable goal. I suspect that everyone in the House supports efforts to preserve, rehabilitate, and restore national historic sites. Canada's network of national historic sites reflects the rich and varied heritage of our nation, and provides opportunities for Canadians and other visitors to learn more about our diverse history.

The legislation now before us would create a new mechanism to help fund the conservation of national historic sites. However, the mechanism is redundant, even though the intention is sound. This government welcomes all donations to heritage sites as a way to further support the conservation of national historic sites. Doing so helps to protect and celebrate our heritage. We should not support a mechanism that would limit the existing framework.

The legislation now before us would establish the conservation of a national historic sites account. Individual members of the public and organizations could donate money to the account, which would be managed by Parks Canada. So far, so good. However, it is the interest earned in the account that would be spent on conservation projects. The principal would remain untouched. Over time, the donations would accumulate and the account would grow. While this approach might look good at first glance, it loses its appeal upon closer scrutiny.

The primary reason that the government does not support Bill C-315 is because the bill's objectives are presently being met by existing donation management practices at Parks Canada.

Private Members' Business

Parks Canada accepts, manages, and spends donations as per the authorities granted to it by the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Financial Administration Act. Under the act, whenever an individual makes a donation to a national historic site, the funds are deposited into a specified purpose account. At the time the donation is made, the donor may specify what he or she wishes the funds to be spent on, such as conservation activities, trail construction, cultural interpretation, asset restoration, etc. Individuals are also able to request that the donation generate interest over time, with the principal held in perpetuity.

Members of the public have shown that they are interested in supporting activities at particular national historic sites through donations. During the fiscal year of 2015-16, the total amount of donations received and deposited into the account was just over \$56,000, directed toward seven national historic sites. None of these donations were made with the added stipulation that the funds generate interest over time. This may be because it is better to spend the entire donation in order to address high priority areas of improvement. If the bill passes and the level of annual donations remains consistent, the interest available will be too small to adequately support conservation activities. This is where our problem lies.

For the sake of argument, let us imagine that Bill C-315 becomes law and that the proposed account attracts 10 times this amount in donations; that is \$560,000. Given that even the most lucrative of secured investment funds yields less than 2% interest these days, each year the account would generate about \$10,000. While this is not an insignificant sum, sadly, it would not make a meaningful contribution to the conservation of national historic sites.

• (1415)

In addition, the restrictions imposed by Bill C-315 may actually discourage donations, because only the interest generated would be used for conservation activities. For example, if the restoration of a canon at the York Redoubt National Historic Site in Nova Scotia is to cost \$1,000, an individual who wishes to donate \$1,000 to support the immediate restoration of the canon might be shocked to learn that he or she would have to wait 35 years until the donation generates enough interest to cover the restoration cost. Ultimately, Bill C-315 would hamper the ability of Parks Canada to invest public donations in conservation projects at national historic sites.

Parks Canada is a recognized leader of heritage conservation. The agency is responsible for protecting and presenting nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage. Along with national parks and national marine conservation areas, Parks Canada manages 171 national historic sites. These include an amazing array of places and stories to discover, from lighthouses to battlefields, and cultural landscapes to historic neighbourhoods. Parks Canada employees and contractors have the expertise, experience, and dedication needed to ensure that these places and stories endure, and that they are safe, accessible, and compelling for all Canadians.

The Government of Canada is investing over \$3 billion over five years to improve, restore and recapitalize Parks Canada's built assets, including national historic sites. This represents the largest infrastructure plan in the 105-year history of Parks Canada. Many

of these projects foster the conservation of heritage buildings and structures. Through these historic investments in heritage places, Parks Canada is protecting and preserving Canada's national historic sites while supporting local economies and contributing to the growth of tourism in their areas. One of the projects funded by this investment is only a short walk from here, along the Rideau Canal.

Parks Canada recognizes the importance of this country's built heritage. Places such as the Rideau Canal, Province House in P.E.I., and many others, express our national identity and connect us to Canada's past, present, and future. Due to many factors, such as neglect, urban development, and climate change, many of Canada's heritage places are at risk. I take comfort in knowing that Parks Canada is committed to maintaining the commemorative integrity of Canada's cultural heritage and conservation activities at the 171 national historic sites that it administers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member of Parliament for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for raising this important issue through his proposal. The conservation of national historic sites is necessarily a co-operative exercise. The Government of Canada works in collaboration with provincial, territorial, and municipal authorities to administer a range of programs. These programs complement one another as they pursue a common goal.

We must do our best to protect Canada's national heritage sites, because these treasured places define and inspire us. They are inherently valuable and have taken on even greater significance this year with the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Bill C-315 would not only duplicate existing legislative provisions, it would also limit Parks Canada's ability to manage and direct available funds to meet conservation priorities. As such, it does not merit the support of this House.

• (1420)

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-315, an act to amend the Parks Canada Agency Act, conservation of national historic sites account.

I greatly commend the member who put forward the bill in the spirit of trying to get more resources to our heritage properties, particularly our national historic sites in Canada.

As we have heard, there are 171 properties owned and managed by Parks Canada. Prior to entering politics, I had the opportunity in my career to work at many of those sites, manage, and to visit them. I have visited them extensively over a 34-year period.

I will go back to the beginning of my career in 1983 at Fort Walsh National Historic Site. It was a place that had been partially developed and consisted of the remains of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police remount ranch. Many of the buildings were in need of rehabilitation. There were some investments that needed to be made in new exhibits. Therefore, financial challenges existed, and this was back in the 1980s.

Private Members' Business

I served as an interpreter and saw some of the challenges that our historic properties faced. As I moved around the country in my career, from being a front-line interpreter to holding supervisory and management positions, I had the huge privilege of going to places such as Whitehorse, where I managed all visitor programs at Parks Canada facilities, and throughout Yukon. One of the gems there is the Dawson City collection of national historic sites.

Parks Canada sites are located in many diverse places, and there are a variety of environmental challenges, such as threats of climate change, as we see in Dawson City. It is an evolving landscape and challenges often arise.

The challenge with the Parks Canada sites is that they are funded by appropriations, and so there are always competing interests. Fortunately, there are many organizations involved, and one near and dear to me is Motherwell Homestead National Historic Site in Saskatchewan. Moreover, in the last decade, I was that manager at Fort Langley National Historic Site in British Columbia. Many of these national historic sites have friends or organizations. They are generally non-profit organizations and are able to work in very close collaboration with Parks Canada to solicit funds. At the property where I was, the Fort Langley National Historic Site, the friends there were involved for many years in fundraising for rehabilitation, rebuilding, and the addition of new assets to the site. They helped build one of the bastions and a portion of the palisade. They helped get a restoration program going. This demonstrates that there are organizations out there that are willing to work in partnership with Parks Canada and who can manage some of the funds and collect donations.

My experience in more than three decades in the field was that people were often reluctant to cut a cheque to the federal government. There was always this concern, and the private member's bill is trying to address that concern by saying there should be specified purpose fund for donations.

However, the challenge with the bill is that only the interest earned will be used. Again, going back to my time as manager at Fort Langley National Historic Site, sometimes managers of these properties have small projects. It may be a \$10,000 renewal of an exhibit, or a \$50,000 installation of a new roof on a building, and if there is no money for that, the community will often be willing to help.

As well, there are already mechanisms in place, as mentioned by some of my colleagues on this side of the House. There are specified purpose funds. The Parks Canada Agency Act and the Financial Administration Act allow the Parks Canada Agency to retain funds and direct them.

The beauty of the existing system is that we are able to raise funds and then expend the full amount. Therefore, if a school group wants to support a project, its entire fundraising effort can go into a specific project, as opposed to going into an account that is locked up in perpetuity and only generates interest in support of these sites.

I hate to speak against any effort to try to increase investment in historic sites, but I just do not think that Bill C-315, as it stands in this format, is the way to do it.

● (1425)

Our environment and sustainable development committee is currently doing a study on the state of built heritage in Canada. We are looking, within the federal collective, at what is working and what is not. We are having some discussions with departments and Parks Canada about existing financial mechanisms that are in place to help protect the built heritage in Canada. We are not through that study yet. I think it is important that we conclude that study and bring forward recommendations.

There may be some interesting things we can do with properties not owned by Parks Canada and the federal government and with the family of national historic sites out there. It would also be great if the federal government committed the funds to maintain its own assets. That would allow us to do fundraising for many of the other heritage properties that exist in Canada that are also in need of investment.

In the study we are doing, we are hearing some very interesting ideas. We are going home for a constituency week now, but we will be coming back and continuing that study. We hope to have recommendations. Our committee, including my hon. colleague from Pontiac, who sits on the committee with me, will be bringing forward recommendations to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. We are hopeful that we will see a response in the coming months.

From there, the government will perhaps be able to respond through legislation and deal with some of the shortcomings, or the need for enhancement, of existing legislation to give commemorative integrity, as an example, primary consideration in the management of national historic sites. It is not currently captured under the Canada National Parks Act.

We have heard testimony that perhaps there should be specific legislation for national historic sites. I think that would be a great move to try to deal with some of the management challenges we have with 171 sites that are owned and operated by Parks Canada.

Will Bill C-315 resolve some of the issues? I do not believe that it will. That is why it is important that our government and the committee actually continue to advance this conversation and that we work together.

We also have an issue we heard about through some very compelling testimony, some very powerful testimony, from indigenous organizations in the country. There are some great opportunities to be looking at how we celebrate indigenous culture and heritage in Canada. It does not tend to fit nicely into the built heritage paradigm we have under a colonial framework. It would be great to see some money and fundraising by various parties, perhaps, go toward a renewed, celebrated indigenous commemoration program, a celebration of culture and heritage.

Private Members' Business

There are lots of questions that need to be asked, important questions about heritage and the role of the federal government in supporting heritage in Canada. Our environment and sustainable development committee is working on that. Although there are some great efforts, such as Bill C-315, to perhaps advance the cause of heritage and the chronic underfunding we see in some locations, there are many other ways we can deal with these issues. I look forward to working with my colleagues on how we can find those solutions eventually.

I want to take this last minute to talk about some of the other amazing places I have been and some of the successes. I spent some time in southern Ontario during my career with Parks Canada. The southwestern Ontario field unit has amazing national historic sites. One that really comes to mind is HMCS *Haida*, in Hamilton. It was a really great project the federal government was able to fund. The community was very supportive, through volunteers, in making it accessible and telling the great stories of that great warship to the people of Canada.

There are existing mechanisms, as I have said, within the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Financial Administration Act that allow

those types of partnerships to allow us to capitalize on the public's interest in heritage and even to grow it.

I thank members for the opportunity to speak to the need for investments and all the ways we can do that for built heritage in Canada.

● (1430)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*English*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, October 16 at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 28(2) and 24(1).

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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