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Monday, November 20, 2017

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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 20, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP) moved that Bill C-348, An Act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act (persons with disabilities), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, with pride for my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, I rise today to speak to my first private member's bill during its second reading in this honourable chamber.

This bill was inspired by the earnest and thoughtful conversations and consultations I have had with people who are civic-minded, practical, and hopeful. Many constituents have brought to my attention the onerous processes involved in applying for federal and provincial programs for persons living with disabilities. Canadians living with disabilities have to apply for each program separately, and they have to demonstrate their disability every single time. It is curious, even disconcerting, to realize that our governments impose this kind of cumbersome process on some of our most vulnerable citizens. It has me thinking again about fairness and efficiency.

Consider further that the processes by which this community interfaces with government agencies to access these programs is so unwieldy that some individuals, when they can manage to afford it, are forced to hire legal representation to help them navigate the labyrinth of programs. To better understand how punitive this feels for people in this situation, it is necessary to look at poverty rates among persons living with disabilities, so let us do that.

According to Statistics Canada, more than 5.3 million Canadians, almost 16% of the population of this country, are living with some form of disability that affects their level of freedom, independence, or quality of life. Of that number, over 200,000 are children and youth, according to Easter Seals Canada. The overall poverty rate for Canadian adults was 10.5% in 2006, which comprised 2.6 million people. However, for people with disabilities, the poverty rate was 14.4%, which comprised nearly 600,000 people.

There is also a real wage gap. According to a 2012 Canadian Human Rights Commission report, men living with disabilities in the 15 to 64 age group earned \$9,557 less than adult males in the same age group who do not live with disabilities.

The picture is even more bleak for women. According to the DisAbled Women's Network, also known as DAWN, 58% of women with disabilities live on less than \$10,000 per year, and of those, 23% live on less than \$5,000 per year. Accessible cribs, accessible and affordable child care, and other services for mothers with disabilities are virtually non-existent.

As members of Parliament who serve all Canadians, we have serious work to do to address the very challenging issues that cause severe hardships that are faced every single day. I have not lost sight of that in discussing this modest bill today.

Disability is expensive. A customized powered wheelchair can cost more than \$25,000. Again, this information is from Easter Seals Canada. A porch lift can cost upwards of \$5,000. A specially designed walker can cost \$2,500. Modifications and renovations to make a home accessible can cost tens of thousands of dollars. For a family, it can cost more than \$40,000 a year to care for a child with a severe disability, yet some of these families have a total income of barely that much, which brings me back to my earlier point.

Some persons living with disabilities find themselves having to hire lawyers to assist them in navigating the complex web of programs available to them from the various levels of government. To me, this is just unacceptable. I see this bill as starting new momentum. When doctors undertake due diligence in completing evaluations on behalf of their patients so they can receive modest assistance, does it not make sense that this form be acceptable to apply to all programs available to the patient, instead of their having to start over again each time? We have to be smarter.

I am confident that as Canadians, we really do not want to force this vulnerable population into spending the scarce resources at their disposal to access programs that exist to provide them with assistance that is, rightfully, there for them.

I would now like to quote one of my constituents, Debra Sandre, who was able to provide me with a very candid overview of her lived experience.

She said, "I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in February of 2014 at the age of 30. Getting a diagnosis like that is hard, stressful, scary and many other adjectives, especially at this age.

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“When trying to work out treatment, doctor's visits with specialists and all the other things to adjust to the new reality of living with a permanent disability it can be very difficult to figure out what resources may be available to you. Once you figure out what services and government assistance you may be entitled to, you then have to apply or prove your disability over and over again. And while proving this over and over you also have to incur the cost of having your doctor fill out the paperwork. This process can and should be easier for people who need the services, and we definitely do not need the added stress of applying for them.”

I really appreciate Debra allowing me to quote her here. I have to say that I could not agree with her more.

When a person attempts to access a benefit for the first time, the quality of that experience, whether it be onerous, overly complicated, or easy and efficient, defines the government for them. As far as they are concerned, it is the government, because these services are the interface between the service provider and the person assessing them. Therefore, those of us in government really need to think about the nature of that experience. We need to always be cognizant of how the delivery of these services is experienced by the people who need them.

Fortunately, for our purposes here today, the improvement of the quality of government services delivery falls within the mandates of two ministers in charge of such things.

In the mandate letter for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, we find this:

Work with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to set transparent service standards so that Canadians get timely access to the benefits to which they are entitled.

In the mandate letter for the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, it says:

Work with the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, who is responsible for Service Canada, to establish new performance standards and set up a mechanism to conduct rigorous assessments of the performance of key government services and report findings publicly.

Bill C-348 deals with what many would call the low-hanging fruit, the first and simplest issues to be dealt with by a government interested in improving the way it delivers important services to its citizens. This bill has the potential to set a new course in how we manage our bureaucracy in a manner that would be a sensible way to make a difference in people's lives.

I am well aware that private member's bills rarely make it into law, which is why I am determined to propose something modest and achievable.

This bears reiterating: currently, people must apply separately to each program and have to endure the ordeal of proving their disabilities each time. Bill C-348 would create a once-stop shop, so to speak, a streamlined approach that would allow individuals to apply for all federal programs at once: the Canada pension plan disability benefit; the disability tax credit; the registered disability savings plan; veterans disability pensions, where applicable, of course; and the opportunities fund. All operate as stand-alone programs with distinct and separate application processes.

●(1110)

This really makes it cumbersome for people living with disabilities to access the federal supports they may be entitled to. We want to try to fix this problem, to the extent we are able, while operating within the constraints of private members' legislation.

Members will note that incorporated in this bill is its own internal review mechanism, which is in keeping with the mandate letters I quoted from earlier. Here is what the bill stipulates in proposed subsection 8.1(1):

Within 18 months after the day on which this section comes into force and every two years after that, the Minister shall undertake a review of the effectiveness of the application process provided for under paragraph 8(2)(b) and prepare a report setting out his or her findings and recommendations.

We all want to make sure that legislation actually works. In this case, we want to know that it genuinely makes the application process simpler for persons living with disabilities. We need to analyze its strengths and challenges and seize the opportunities and synergies that would become apparent when applying this practical directive. This would allow for the valuable input of our public service, which has the expertise and insight to respond to this directive.

Those following this issue will know that having in place a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the government's accessibility legislation was being implemented as to its intended capabilities was a major part of what Canadians told the government during its consultations over this past year.

I envision a time when we will have more streamlined access and coordination with provinces so that when a person is deemed eligible for one disability program, it opens access to another: gateways, not hurdles; bridges, not silos. Our real job here in this place is to continually move forward to remove the barriers to participation in a quality life. This would be the first step in a real opportunity to set the tone, the new approach, that would be a springboard for further discussion and action at all levels of government.

The internal review would ensure that we engage meaningfully to maximize our resources and enrich the Canadian experience in this modest way. I am sure now that those listening are contemplating the potential reach of this type of bureaucratic direction and what implications this could very well have. I certainly welcome the gained momentum that persons living with disabilities, and their families, are eagerly awaiting from this government.

As I have already mentioned, this is the low-hanging fruit, a no-brainer, so to speak. Let us go ahead and deal with these issues right away, the better to then address the more complex barriers facing persons living with disabilities in Canada. I extend my hand across the aisle to work together to do this, because this is what we are compelled to do in this place.

Private Members' Business

• (1115)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the words from the member across the way. One of the things I want to pick up on is that there is a role for the national government to play, and I would suggest, a leading role. One is to ensure that the provinces and territories and other stakeholders recognize that to advance the causes the member referenced, there needs to be a higher sense of co-operation with those different stakeholders.

I am interested in the member's thoughts on how important it is that those other groups, some of which I referred, also be engaged on this important issue.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, it is intriguing for those of us who look at the inside of government and want that efficiency, fairness, and effectiveness that I referred to in my speech.

I do not want to detract from the real purpose of the bill, which is to make sure we create the tone and attitude of the one stop shop for our federal programs. This is a real springboard for us to look at how we are operating in silos that do not to be there. We can work with provinces.

There is nothing wrong with a federal program that, hypothetically, if someone in the province of Ontario is collecting a disability pension, ODSP, then that eligibility should automatically let them be recognized for some other program without having to reprove it. I know that is somewhere down the road, but that is an example of how I see so many inefficiencies in levels of government. I am excited that we can start with something as modest as this, which fits within the private members' legislation. It is a great opportunity for us to move forward and take the lead on something in an effective way.

I am pleased that it is an opportunity to do something especially for our vulnerable populations, who are already finding access to their programs quite challenging.

• (1120)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to praise the member for Windsor—Tecumseh. She talks about a modest bill. This bill will make a significant impact on the poorest of Canadians. Half the people in our country who are homeless are people with disabilities. Half of those who line up for food banks at the end of the month are people with disabilities. However, there are hundreds of thousands of Canadians who should have access to disability programs and are not able to access them because the government has had such a complicated approach for people with disabilities. I have met with people with disabilities across the country. They are living in poverty and are often unaware of the diverse programs that are there to support them but are simply inaccessible.

I would therefore like to praise the member for Windsor—Tecumseh and ask her the following. What impact would it have if every person with a disability in our country could access every program that is already in place? How would that address chronic poverty, chronic homelessness, and chronic difficulties for Canadians with disabilities across our country?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his impassioned comments and the question, which is what is enthusing us here today. We know there is huge potential in this kind of access, and we can envision a time when there would be even more opportunities. However, right now, the fact is that people who are already vulnerable are struggling to access programs.

This is what compelled me to want to bring this private member's bill forward. This kind of approach is so profound that I cannot even describe it. All of us in this place who are doing our jobs in our ridings know this. Speaking to people directly in our ridings, we know that the interface of government at this level is something we could be doing a lot better to address. It would be an absolutely amazing transformation as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me an opportunity to talk about Bill C-348. I would like to begin by explaining what this bill is about.

Bill C-348, introduced by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, would streamline the application process for programs and services for people with disabilities.

If passed, this bill would amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act to make the department the primary point of contact for access to programs and services related to disability assistance.

First of all, I would like to say that our government is committed to improving how we provide services to Canadians with disabilities. Ours is the first government to have appointed a minister responsible for people with disabilities, the Minister for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, thereby demonstrating our conviction that programs and services for people with disabilities must no longer take a back seat.

This new approach reflects Canada's commitment to becoming more accessible and inclusive. We believe that all Canadians should be positioned to seize every opportunity that comes their way, from educational to professional and everything in between, so they can participate fully in society.

That is what informs our position on Bill C-348. Right off the bat, let me say that we fully support the spirit of the bill. In fact, I would like to share with you some of the initiatives we already have under way and others that are in the planning stages. These initiatives are also designed to improve services for people with disabilities.

We believe that creating an appropriate framework to support all of these measures is vital, which is why we are currently drafting the accessibility legislation my colleague had so much to say about.

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Last year, we launched an ambitious public consultation process. We met with stakeholders and the general public to learn more about what an accessible Canada means to them. We held 18 public consultations and nine thematic round tables across the country. There was an important online component, which was very effective. We also created a national forum for youth, and the Prime Minister participated in it. The government funded the creation of partnerships with five organizations for people with disabilities and three indigenous organizations to get the input of their members and communities. This process helped us gain valuable insight into the obstacles that people with disabilities or functional limitations have to overcome every day.

We published a report that summarizes what we learned from these consultations. The participants described the physical and architectural barriers that prevent people with disabilities from moving about freely in their communities. We learned about some of the attitudes, beliefs, and preconceived notions that Canadians have about what people with disabilities can and cannot do, and we looked at outdated policies and practices, including some mentioned by my colleague, that do not take into account the obstacles facing people with disabilities.

That is why we are currently drafting legislation on accessibility in order to build a more inclusive Canada. It is our hope that this proactive legislation will systematically address the barriers that exist in areas of federal jurisdiction. The legislation should deal with banking institutions, transportation, telecommunications, and, of course, everything we mentioned earlier—in other words, every Government of Canada department and agency where improvement is needed.

On an operational level, this legislation would serve as a guide in the development and delivery of federal services for persons with disabilities, which includes almost all communications to clients regarding programs and services.

• (1125)

I would add that Employment and Social Development Canada is also developing a strategy that will improve the services offered to persons with disabilities. The service strategy will help provide more online services to meet the current and future needs of this group of people.

In addition, ESDC is committed to ensuring that the Canada pension plan disability program continues to meet the needs of Canadians. The department is currently streamlining its application process to make it less cumbersome for applicants and doctors. A revised prototype of the paper application form should be developed later this year. In November 2015, the department began a comprehensive review of the program's services standards, which included consultations with recipients and stakeholders.

There is currently a pilot project for long-term disability recipients that seeks to increase the number of documents that can be submitted electronically and indicate the medical information required in order to make the process easier for applicants. There are many initiatives to improve recipients' access to and experience with federal programs and services, especially for people with disabilities. For example, changes were recently made to the application process for

the Canada student loans program to help support students with permanent disabilities who want help with repayment assistance.

The Canada Revenue Agency has taken steps to simplify the application process for the disability tax credit by improving the process and providing clearer information to applicants. These are just a few examples of what the government is doing to continue improving services for Canadians, especially people with disabilities.

Although Bill C-348 is well-intentioned, we believe it will not meet its objectives. The bill would create a one-stop-shop for all federal benefits and programs for people with disabilities. However, we do not understand how the bill would expedite the application process and improve the quality of services provided by the various departments. If we understand Bill C-348 correctly, every department will continue to be responsible for its own activities by exercising their own authorities. If ESDC had to be solely responsible for all programs for people with disabilities, this would create a separate administration for various programs that are not currently carried out by the department.

For example, Veterans Affairs Canada administers some disability programs. Under Bill C-348, this department would be responsible for administering the decision-making process and for determining the eligibility of applicants, but would not be able to communicate with recipients because ESDC would be the only point of contact, the one-stop shop.

We therefore question the practical relevance of Bill C-348, and we will not support its passage. Our position on this bill in no way diminishes our resolve to provide high-quality services to persons with disabilities and all Canadians.

I thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for getting involved in this important discussion. We look forward to working with her to develop measures for persons with disabilities. In addition, I want to thank my colleague for meeting with me recently on this topic. I also want the member to know that this issue is an integral part of our government's overall objectives to make Canada a more accessible and inclusive country. We are mobilizing all the necessary resources and making every effort to meet these objectives.

Private Members' Business

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-348, an act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act, persons with disabilities. The bill, put forward by my NDP colleague, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, would help to simplify the challenges persons with disabilities face when looking to apply for programs administered through the federal government. It is a good idea based on my personal experiences and from what I have heard from Canadians during my time as a member of Parliament.

Persons with disabilities have to overcome many obstacles in order to build a dignified life. It seems logical to me that the federal government should be doing everything in its power to assist with this. However, instead of getting that help, disabled persons are instead facing large amounts of red tape and bureaucracy. They must scour through computer and paper descriptions and directions in department after department, asking “Where do we start?”

Bill C-348 seeks to address this issue by requiring the minister for Employment and Social Development Canada to provide information and guidance on all applications for grants, benefits, compensation, and any other programs and services for which persons with a disability may be eligible, under one roof and within one document.

The bill would also have two other requirements: first, the department maintain a single comprehensive application that accesses all programs for persons with a disability across the federal government; and second, to report back to Parliament in 18 months on the effectiveness of the application process. This would provide an assessment of the value of the changes and allow for it to be a living document that would continue to evolve.

All the points I just mentioned seem like common sense measures to me. Why would we ask those who already face so many challenges to spend countless hours scouring various government websites to find all the programs and services for which they are eligible, and then having to fill out an application form for each individual program to which they would like to apply? Having to fill out each program application individually does not help anyone. It is frustrating for all Canadians to have to do this, let alone those with disabilities who are already facing huge issues such as chronic underemployment, difficulty accessing public spaces, a lack of accessible housing, and much more.

Computer literacy is a challenge to many of us. Navigating these forms, whether old or young, is even more difficult with a disability. The federal government's role is to help Canadians, and the bill would be a great start to do that. However, as it stands, and if left unchecked, it is just more red tape resulting in more frustration.

I would like to take a moment to speak about my experience as a former member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and to give everyone an idea of how all this bureaucracy affects our disabled veterans. I know that part of the bill includes veterans disability pensions, which I am pleased to see. During my time on the committee, I heard first-hand testimony about how difficult it

was to apply for the benefits to which our veterans were entitled. To search and navigate the multiple sites was a frustrating challenge.

Many of these men and women suffer from mental health issues as well as physical disabilities. This means they are not always able to devote hours and hours to find available programs, fill out applications, and then have to do the same over again for each program for which they are eligible. In some cases, we heard from veterans who simply decided to throw in the towel and forgo the services they were entitled to because the process of applying for these services was far too strenuous and compounding for those struggling with a disability, whether it be mental or physical.

These veterans are the people who gave up the life they knew in order to protect Canada and all Canadians. It was absolutely heartbreaking to hear some of the testimony at the veterans affairs committee, as these individuals deserve so much more than a cacophony of programs, spread across the federal government's websites, requiring hours of digging to find and more hours of filling out multiple applications in order to apply. It is unnecessary and it does a disservice not just to our veterans, but to everyone living with a disability, as well as their caretakers and family members.

That in itself is another point I would like to raise. It is not just disabled persons who deal with this issue, but often their families as well. Many times caretakers come from the family of a disabled person, and many times they are not talked about or given recognition.

• (1135)

Being a caretaker is not an easy job, and I commend all those who undertake the role. The bill would make it easier for caregivers and families to ensure they would be taking advantage of all programs available to them without having to comb through various websites to find that information. It would avoid hours of searching, determining if a service or program would be applicable, disseminating this to their family member, and then completing the multitude of applications.

Furthermore, Bill C-348 would provide for a single, comprehensive application that would access all programs across the federal government for persons with disabilities. This seems so logical that I am surprised it has not yet been done.

While I understand these programs involve a number of government departments, centralizing the application process through the Department of Employment and Social Development would be a huge benefit to persons with disabilities and their families. It would save much time, effort, and frustration. It is also a real and achievable goal. I call on the government to recognize the need for this measure. With the technology available today, we know this is possible to do, and further technological advances would ensure this would be generationally enduring.

Under the previous Conservative government, we initiated the centralization of information across government based on the user group. The bill would continue that work, specifically for persons with disabilities, who are the demographic that would most benefit from this initiative.

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Other examples of a few programs that have to be navigated through include helping persons with disabilities prepare for and obtain employment through the annual \$30 million opportunities fund, and funds like the \$218 million per year labour market agreement for persons with disabilities to assist provinces and territories to improve the employment situation. Again, these are just two programs of many.

I see no reason not to support the legislation, especially given that the Liberal government is making life more difficult for Canadians living with disabilities by increasing their cost of living through tax changes and removing benefits. Persons with type 1 diabetes and persons with autism spectrum disorders come quickly to mind. As I stated previously, it is the federal government's job to improve life for all Canadians, including for disabled persons. The way to do this is not by taking away benefits or adding more layers of red tape to the process of obtaining said benefits. It is by simplifying and centralizing, which is exactly what the bill seeks to do.

I commend the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for her efforts on the bill.

As the deputy shadow minister for youth, sport and persons with disabilities, I call on the government to support the bill and the measures contained in it, as we on this side of the House plan to do. It is good sense and it would make life significantly easier for those facing the challenge of living with disabilities, something I know we can all get behind.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my wonderful colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh. I am rising to debate her bill in the House, but I would also like to take this opportunity to once again wish her a happy birthday.

On a more serious note, today, we celebrate the birth of my colleague's Bill C-348, an act to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act regarding persons with disabilities. This bill would make their dealings with the federal government easier.

The bill would show that the government is reaching out. It would significantly simplify the process for persons with disabilities who want to access the many federal programs for which they are eligible. The government has no reason to oppose my colleague's bill.

The problem we are trying to fix today may seem quite trivial, but persons with disabilities lose a lot of time and energy when they are constantly required to submit multiple applications.

We all know how onerous and complicated it can be to navigate the labyrinth of the federal system in search of information about a program. Filling out the application paperwork is just as cumbersome. Now imagine the added humiliation of having to prove your disability every time you apply. People with disabilities often have a tough time of it. I think it is a basic sign of respect to provide a one-stop shop where they can get all their needs met at once.

It was in this context that my colleague, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, introduced this bill. We hope the government will be able to see this proposal for what it is, not as a polarizing issue.

I would like to give a typical example that broadly illustrates this problem. To do so, I will describe what some of my constituents go through.

The Canada pension plan disability, the disability tax credit, the registered disability savings program, the veterans disability pensions, and the opportunities fund all operate as stand-alone programs with distinct and separate application processes.

This reality makes it cumbersome for people living with disabilities to access federal supports that they are entitled to. Bill C-348 will create a one-stop shop that will allow individuals to do everything at once. Moreover, persons living with disabilities will only need to prove their disability one time, rather than doing so with each application.

That is the current situation, from a very general standpoint.

Now I would like to give a very specific example, the experience of someone in my riding, Jonquière. I met a constituent at a social function who alerted me to the problem. I asked her to meet with me. The woman's name is Ms. Tremblay. Her wife was severely disabled, and Ms. Tremblay was her caregiver for many years. She cared for her wife on her own, because they had no immediate family close by. When Ms. Tremblay came to see me in my office, we worked together and found out that they were eligible for certain tax credits. After that, she had to start the process all over again and return to see the neurologist for certification of her wife's severe disability. I get a little emotional when I speak about this woman, because her wife has since passed away. As we supported her through the process, her wife's cancer returned.

• (1145)

On top of having to relive the experience of her wife's disability and have it certified again by her neurologist, she also had to wait for her disability tax credit. She also had to wait quite a while for the Canada Revenue Agency to make a decision following her application, thanks to the current process.

In light of all these arguments, it is clear that no one is talking to one another and that the various programs are not coordinated in any way. That is why it took so long. In Ms. Tremblay's case, a one-stop shop could have provided the resources and funds she needed to pay for her wife's end-of-life care and to continue caring for her.

The idea for the bill came from conversations my colleague had with constituents and local civil society groups. However, as Ms. Tremblay's story shows, this also affects people in my riding, Jonquière, and in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. The fact is, this problem is everywhere.

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Since I am responsible for the Canada Post file, I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that I am still waiting for the government's new policy statement from the 2016 review. I will not spend too much time on this, but I still want to talk about home mail delivery and service cuts. People with disabilities across Canada have their mail delivered in various ways. In some cases, they have community mailboxes because letter carriers no longer do home mail delivery. People with physical disabilities must fill out a form to get home mail delivery. That means that they have to once again go back to their doctor to explain their situation, take all of the necessary steps, and fill out all of the paperwork all over again.

There is a cost associated with this process. Doctors often charge a fee to fill out forms, but people with physical or mental disabilities often do not work, so they have less money to pay these fees, which can be quite high.

Can all the agencies involved not simply do a better job coordinating services? That is the goal of this bill. It seeks to help everyone to communicate more easily. People should not have to go through the whole process again because they just found out that they have been eligible for a tax credit for the past two or three years. They will just end up losing more money that could be better spent on additional care to improve their quality of life. My colleague's bill seeks to remedy that. The government has not had much to say, but I do not understand why it does not want to support such a simple thing.

On top of dealing with their disability every day, people with disabilities have to worry about this sort of thing, take additional steps, fill out endless piles of paperwork, and pay out-of-pocket charges. A single application would improve their quality of life and allow them to receive care when they discover that they are eligible for a tax credit that they were not aware of.

I hope that the government will reconsider its decision and vote in favour of my colleague's bill, Bill C-348.

• (1150)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, people with disabilities need services that meet their needs. However, we must keep in mind that there is no single solution that works for everyone.

I am pleased to have this opportunity today to talk about Bill C-348. This bill was introduced by my colleague from the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh. I congratulate her on being so determined to ensure that all Canadians, no matter their circumstances, have easy access to government programs and services.

Our government strives to ensure that all Canadians are treated equally, and we were the first in this country's history to appoint a minister for persons with disabilities.

Like my colleague, our government wholeheartedly supports streamlining the application process for programs and services for people with disabilities. Also like my colleague, we believe that the faster and easier these processes are, the better it is for the applicants. That is exactly why we cannot support Bill C-348.

We cannot support this bill because its proposed approach would not actually streamline access to programs and services for people with disabilities.

Under Bill C-348, Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, would have to process the applications currently being processed by other federal departments. This would create separation between the clients and the government agencies providing the programs and related support measures for which the clients are applying. In other words, this would put some distance between the clients and the agencies' expertise.

Think about it. A wide range of federal programs and support measures are offered to persons with disabilities. Those include the Canada pension plan disability benefits, disability tax credits, the registered disability savings plan, and veterans' benefits, to name a few.

Streamlining the application process for all these programs under a single department or portal will not make it more accessible, faster, or fairer.

Please understand that our government is fully in favour of improving application processes for persons with disabilities. We simply do not believe that Bill C-348 would help achieve that objective. In fact, it would defeat the purpose for which it was introduced.

That being said, I would also like to remind members of the important initiatives already underway to improve access to federal programs and services for people with disabilities.

The first initiative I want to talk about is, of course, the new accessibility bill. It is our hope that this proactive bill will systematically address the barriers to accessibility that exist in areas of federal jurisdiction, including banking services, transportation, broadcasting, telecommunications, and, naturally, the Government of Canada itself. We will remove barriers by creating a set of standards that employers, service providers, program managers, and companies will be expected to abide by.

We also plan to include compliance verification and enforcement mechanisms in this act.

The next initiative I want to talk about is one that was announced in budget 2017. Our government announced an investment of \$12.1 million in 2017-18 to ESDC to develop modern approaches to service delivery, including speeding up application processes.

ESDC is developing a department-wide service strategy that will improve services to Canadians, including Canadians with disabilities.

• (1155)

The strategy has the following goals: to enable clients to complete services using digital self-service; to allow clients to access bundled and connected services seamlessly across channels; and to anticipate clients' needs. This initiative will also affect the Canada pension plan and old age security programs.

Private Members' Business

Members may recall that, in November 2015, our government conducted an in-depth audit of the Canada pension plan disability program. We expect to have a revised application prototype by the end of this year. These efforts are part of a broader service improvement strategy, which is primarily aimed at improving access and enhancing the client experience for all Canadians with disabilities, including students.

In fact, our government made changes to the application process for the Canada student loan program and repayment assistance measures for students with disabilities. It is important to point out that Employment and Social Development Canada is not the only department that is working to improve access and the client experience for all Canadians with disabilities. In fact, the Canada Revenue Agency is always looking for ways to improve the administration of the disability tax credit.

Veterans Affairs Canada is also taking part in these efforts. In budget 2017, our government declared its intention to introduce new measures to streamline and simplify the system of financial support programs currently offered to veterans. With this initiative, we will deliver on our commitment to introduce the option for injured veterans to receive a monthly disability pension for life instead of a lump sum payment.

Health Canada also supports a certain number of programs and services that provide direct assistance to disabled members of first nations and the Inuit.

I would be remiss if I did not mention one last initiative, but not the least important one. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada plans to revise its policy and authorize staff at Canada's passport offices to help people fill out passport applications, including people with a disability who need assistance.

As the House can see, our government has already implemented a number of initiatives to improve access to federal programs and services for all Canadians with disabilities.

I am pleased to see my colleagues, like my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh, bring forward proposals that are in line with our government's actions. Bill C-348 is well-intentioned. However, as I said, we do not think that this is a practical solution.

Once again, I congratulate my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh on all of her work.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that our government is committed to giving Canadians with disabilities equal opportunities and to make our society more inclusive. Above all, we are doing everything to make this happen.

● (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must inform the hon. member for Drummond that I will have to interrupt him at 12:04 p.m. and that he will be able to finish his speech the next time this bill is before the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am disappointed that you will have to cut me off since I was planning on getting through my whole speech today, but that is okay, because I will come back to it another time. I would be more than

happy to do so because it is a very important debate on very serious subject.

I thank my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh for introducing this bill, which seeks to amend the Department of Employment and Social Development Act with regard to people with disabilities. Personally, thank God, I am not someone with a disability, but I do know people who are. When they tell me about all the challenges they have to face on a daily basis, I realize just how brave and incredibly independent they are. However, there are still barriers in their way, and that is what this bill is trying to fix.

Bill C-348 seeks to considerably streamline the process for persons with disabilities to access the many federal programs for which they are eligible. This is extremely important. When I was first elected, I was unaware of the challenges persons with disabilities faced in accessing programs, until my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby suggested that I hold information sessions on the disability tax credit to let my constituents know they are entitled to it. He said I would be surprised to learn how many people have no idea they are eligible.

After announcing this information session, I thought that maybe 15 or 20 people might attend, but 150 people showed up. That is a clear indication that the situation needs to be improved. That is why this bill is so important. I have been holding information sessions on the disability tax credit for six years now, and every year, a hundred or so people attend to find out what they are entitled to. This is something that should not be difficult for them, but unfortunately there are many obstacles. This bill seeks to simplify the process. That is why it is so important and needs to be supported.

Currently, persons with disabilities have to submit a separate application for every federal program and prove their disability every time. That makes no sense. There should be a one-stop shop. Bill C-348 will create a one-stop shop where they can submit all their applications at once. Why complicate things when we can simplify them? That is why we must support this bill.

I am shocked that Liberal members are saying they will vote against this bill, when they keep calling it a good bill and thanking my colleague for all her work. Where is the logic in that? If it is a good bill, then support it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I hate to interrupt the member for Drummond, but he can continue his speech when the House resumes debate on this bill.

● (1205)

[*English*]

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT, 2017

(Bill C-59. On the Order: Government Orders:)

June 20, 2017—the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security of Bill C-59, An Act respecting national security matters.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that:

Bill C-59, An Act respecting national security matters, be referred forthwith to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

He said: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada has no greater responsibility than keeping Canadians safe. We must fulfill that essential and solemn obligation while at the same time safeguarding Canadian rights and freedoms.

[Translation]

This double objective of protecting Canadians while defending their rights and freedoms was the basis of our commitments regarding national security during the last election, and it informed everything we have done in the area since we have been in government.

[English]

We have, for example, created a committee of parliamentarians with unprecedented access to classified information to scrutinize the activities of all national security and intelligence agencies. We have launched the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence to help Canada become a world leader in counter-radicalization.

We have issued new ministerial directions that more clearly prohibit conduct that would result in a substantial risk of torture. Our starting point was the most extensive and inclusive consultations about national security ever undertaken by the Government of Canada. Beginning in the spring of 2016, that effort involved individual stakeholders, round tables, town halls, various renowned experts, studies by parliamentary committees, and a broad solicitation of views online. More than 75,000 submissions were received.

All of this fresh input was supplemented by earlier judicial inquiries by Iacobucci, O'Connor, and Major, as well as several parliamentary proposals, certain court judgments, and reports from existing national security review bodies. It all helped to shape the legislation before us today, Bill C-59, the national security act of 2017.

The measures in this bill cover three core themes, enhancing accountability and transparency, correcting problematic elements from the former Bill C-51, and updating our national security laws to ensure that our agencies can keep pace with evolving threats.

One of the major advances in this legislation is the creation of the national security and intelligence review agency. This new body, which has been dubbed by some as a "super SIRC", will be mandated to review any activity carried out by any government department that relates to national security and intelligence, as well as any matters referred to it by the government. It will be able to investigate public complaints. It will specifically replace the existing

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review bodies for CSIS and the Communications Security Establishment, but it will also be authorized to examine security and intelligence activities throughout the government, including the Canada Border Services Agency.

In this day and age, security operations regularly involve multiple departments and agencies. Therefore, effective accountability must not be limited to the silo of one particular institution. Rather, it must follow the trail wherever it leads. It must provide for comprehensive analysis and integrated findings and recommendations. That is exactly what Canadians will get from this new review agency.

Bill C-59 also creates the brand new position of the intelligence commissioner, whose role will be to oversee and approve, or not approve, certain intelligence activities by CSIS and the CSE in advance. The intelligence commissioner will be a retired or supernumerary superior court judge whose decisions will be binding. In other words, if he or she says that a particular proposed operation is unreasonable or inappropriate, it will simply not proceed.

Taken together, the new comprehensive review agency, the intelligence commissioner, and the new committee of parliamentarians will give Canada accountability mechanisms of unprecedented scope and depth. This is something that Canadians have been calling for, and those calls intensified when the former Bill C-51 was introduced. We heard them loud and clear during our consultations, and we are now putting these accountability measures into place.

● (1210)

Bill C-59 also brings clarity and rigour to internal government information sharing under the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act, or SCISA. This is the law that allows government institutions to share information with each other in respect of activities that undermine the security of Canada. Among other things, Bill C-59 would change the name of the law, in English, to the security of Canada information disclosure act, to be clear that we are talking only about the disclosure of existing information, not the collection of anything new. Government institutions will now be required to keep specific records of all disclosures made under the act, and to provide these records to the new review agency.

Importantly, Bill C-59 clarifies the definition of activities "that undermine the security of Canada". For example, it is explicit in stating that advocacy, protest, dissent, and artistic expression are not included. The new legislation would also provide more precision in the definition of "terrorist propaganda", in line with the well-known criminal offence of counselling.

The paramountcy of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is an overriding principle in Bill C-59. That is perhaps most evident in the updates that we are proposing to the CSIS Act. This is the law that created CSIS back in 1984, and it has not been modernized in any meaningful way since then.

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The former Bill C-51 empowered CSIS to engage in measures to reduce threats to the security of Canada without clearly defining what those measures could and could not include. We are now creating a specific closed list of measures that CSIS will have the authority to take to deal with threats. If any such activity might limit a charter right, CSIS will have to go before a judge. The activity can only be allowed if the judge is satisfied that it is compliant with the charter.

Another concern we heard during the consultations and more generally has been about the no-fly list, especially the problem of false positives, which affects people whose names are similar to listed individuals. This is due to long-standing design flaws in the way that the no-fly list was first created many years ago. Those flaws require legislative, regulatory, and technological changes to fix them.

Bill C-59 includes the necessary legislative changes and paves the way for the others that will be necessary. In essence, Canada's no-fly list currently piggybacks onto the airlines' computer systems, which means that the government does not control the fields to be included nor the way that the whole system works. This bill would give us the authority we need to allow the government, instead of airlines, to screen passenger information against the no-fly list. The people who have been affected by this, especially those with children, feel frustrated and stigmatized by their no-fly problems. That is entirely understandable, and that is why we are working so hard to get this fixed. Passing Bill C-59 is a necessary step toward that end.

There is much more in Bill C-59 than I could possibly deal with in these 10 minutes, but in keeping with the open and inclusive approach that we have taken with this legislation since before it was even drafted, we are sending it to committee before second reading to ensure that the examination of the bill is as thorough as possible.

Professor Craig Forcese, a respected expert in national security law from the University of Ottawa, said Bill C-59 “appears to be more carefully crafted than anything we've seen in this area in a long time...”. I appreciate that, but there is still more work to be done.

I certainly hope to hear ideas and advice from colleagues in the House. We are open to constructive suggestions as we work together to ensure that Canada's national security framework is as strong and effective as it can possibly be.

•(1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech.

We are told that these changes to the provisions regarding Canadian Security Intelligence Service agents are about finding a balance between the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the actions that agents can carry out under Bill C-51.

I would like the minister to explain to me how he thinks that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms might impact potential terrorists as compared to honest citizens. In his opinion, why is it important for such a balance to be achieved?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is in the Constitution of Canada and applies in all

circumstances unless a legislature has said, with respect to a specific matter, that the notwithstanding clause applies. Failing that, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the paramount law of this country.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank for minister for his speech, but as he said at the end of it, there is a lot more he wishes he could get to, which is exactly part of the problem here.

On this proposed piece of omnibus legislation, the minister can correct me if I am mistaken, but he did not mention any of the changes to CSEC, or the creation of cyber weapons, and the concerns these are causing and what exactly they will mean. To me, when I see these proposed changes to that mandate and to the cybersecurity aspect, we know that a big component of this has to do with the National Defence Act.

We have this motion before us today, which is not the actual bill but rather a motion to refer the bill to committee before second reading. Does the minister not find it problematic that, because of this motion, there will essentially be a loophole not allowing us to refer to Standing Order 69(1), under which we could ask the Speaker to vote on the different elements of this huge bill, which go far beyond simply reforming Bill C-51, as the government promised. We are really dealing with a bunch of different elements that require, at the very least, parliamentarians being able to vote on certain individual elements. I gave one example of this.

Could the minister comment on that, and does he agree that we should be able to vote on the different elements of the bill separately, as has been the case in the past?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, what we have undertaken here is the most significant overhaul of the national security framework ever undertaken in this country, certainly since the passage of the CSIS Act in 1984. This is comprehensive change that touches on a variety of elements, which all hang together in a coherent way and need to be considered together. One of the reasons we are following the procedure that we have adopted today is to give parliamentarians the maximum flexibility to examine the details of the legislation and to make their views known.

If we go through the normal second reading debate and refer the bill to committee after second reading, then the principles will already be locked in and cannot be changed. With the process we have adopted today, we are allowing members of Parliament the maximum flexibility to present new ideas, to offer alternative suggestions, and to present amendments at committee, which is, of course, the place where the detailed work is done. The procedure we are following today would give parliamentarians more scope and opportunity to influence the outcome of the proposed legislation than they would have have under any other procedure of the House.

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Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I trust the minister will appreciate there is a certain sense of cynicism with respect to the committee process. Obviously, the membership of the committee is dominated by the government side. However, I was pleased to hear the minister say that he is open to advice and suggestions by committee members.

If good, sound principles of change with respect to the bill come from the opposition members, and indeed the NDP, at committee, will the government listen to the opposition sides?

• (1220)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, that is the whole point of adopting the procedure we have adopted today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-59 and to express my concerns about this bill being passed in its current form. I have read through the bill carefully and tried to understand the intentions of the Liberals, who seem to want to accommodate terrorists.

In the Liberals' speeches, they try to convince us that they are looking out for Canadians and working to keep them safe. However, if we look at their actions, such as the ones proposed in Bill C-59, it is obvious that either the Liberals are getting bad advice, or they are more concerned about the rights of criminals than those of law-abiding Canadians.

Let me explain. The most significant and most contentious change that Bill C-59 would make to the Criminal Code is the amendment of the offence set out in section 83.221, which applies to "Every person who...knowingly advocates or promotes the commission of terrorism offences in general". Bill C-59 would introduce a much more stringent test by changing the wording to "Every person who counsels another person to commit a terrorism offence".

The same goes for the definition of "terrorist propaganda" in subsection 83.222(8), which will significantly reduce the ability of law enforcement officials to use the tool for dismantling terrorist propaganda with judicial authorization as set out in Bill C-51. One could argue that using the expression "another person" means that the offence must target someone specifically rather than the broader target of domestic terrorism and the offence that Bill C-51 is supposed to prevent.

Madam Speaker, I know you understand the importance of what I just said. If Bill C-59 passes in its current form, terrorists will be free to spread all kinds of propaganda using social media, without any fear of being arrested or prosecuted.

The vast majority of terrorist activities are generated from propaganda that is spread in a general way, rather than directed at a specific person. Imagine how this measure will affect the work of our police officers and how we combat terrorism. This proposal is absurd, because it protects criminals and those who want to engage in violence in our country. The government has some explaining to do, and I mean today.

Bill C-59 limits what the Canadian Security Intelligence Service can do to help us protect ourselves. When Bill C-51 was tabled by

our government, it gave CSIS the power to engage in threat disruption activities. This meant CSIS could contact the parents of a radicalized youth and urge them to prevent their child from travelling to a war zone or committing an attack here in Canada.

However, if the Liberals' Bill C-59 passes, CSIS will lose that power and will not be able to do anything on the spot to protect us. All of its activities will require a warrant, which is not exactly convenient when the goal is to stop someone from committing an act of terror. Currently, a CSIS agent can pretend to be a local resident to influence someone who is preparing to commit a terrorist act. Bill C-59 will put a stop to that. Agents will just have to watch the threat develop and will have to get a warrant from a judge before they can take action. By the time the warrant is issued, it could be too late. Why are the Liberals putting so many obstacles in the way of law enforcement, who are just trying to protect us Canadians?

The Conservative Party has always taken Canadians' safety seriously, as demonstrated by the introduction and passage of Bill C-51. We must not forget that this bill was passed by the Conservative government with the support of the Liberals, who were then the second opposition party. A couple of years ago, in 2015, the Liberals were in agreement. There was a slight change during the election campaign and now they have introduced Bill C-59, but let us not forget that Bill C-51 was approved by the Liberals.

Now it seems that the Liberals are trying to make things more difficult for the officers tasked with fighting these criminals. In 2015, during the campaign, our Liberal colleagues clearly stated that, if they were elected, they would amend this legislation. It is important to highlight that the bill was only introduced in Parliament at the end of June of this year. It took them 18 months.

• (1225)

The Liberals took their sweet time in keeping their election promise. Perhaps they realized that the original legislation was not as flawed as they thought. They now want to make amendments to show that they are keeping another promise.

The Conservative Party knows how important it is to have measures regarding national security institutions and the responsibility that comes with that. For us, there is no question that the safety of Canadians comes before the comfort of terrorists and criminals. Canadians who love their country come before those who are seeking to destroy it. Unlike the Liberals, we are committed to protecting Canadians. That is not just an idea that we came up with during the election campaign. We have always been committed to that goal because the threat still exists and has not diminished. The threat posed by these criminals is becoming increasingly sophisticated.

We have also heard that these thugs are wandering the streets of our communities after fighting with ISIS. They fought against our own soldiers. We know that they fought alongside ISIS and that many of them came back to Canada. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is now saying that he is looking for evidence to arrest them. That is all well and good, but in the meantime, Canadians need clearer information about the situation.

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Where is the transparency that the Liberals promised Canadians? Why is the Minister of Public Safety not saying anything about these criminals? Why is he being so silent on this?

As it now stands, Bill C-59 will greatly hinder the efforts of our peace officers and compromise the safety of Canadians, while facilitating the work of terrorists.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that this bill has its roots in Bill C-51. I have been an MP for nearly seven years, and never have I seen a bill meet with such opposition from people who disagree with its purpose and take issue with what it brings to the table.

Polling results released as people became aware of the bill spoke volumes. At one point during the debate, before the bill even got to committee, experts and lawyers savaged it, telling us exactly how it set out to supposedly protect so-called honest Canadians, as my colleague refers to them, and 50% of the people who were aware of the bill opposed it.

If my colleague is so keen to protect those honest, law-abiding Canadians, perhaps he can explain to me why we should pass a bill and bring in measures that put those very Canadians at risk by collecting information about them and taking away their right to protest, which is something all citizens of a democratic country should be free to do.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned so-called honest folk.

When I talk about honest Canadians, I am talking about the vast majority of Canadians who are honest and want to live freely in Canada. When I talk about terrorists, criminals, that is who I am talking about. I do not want us to protect these people who decide to become terrorists and criminals. All I want is for terrorists and criminals to be arrested and put in prison and never heard from for a good, long while. We are here to protect honest Canadians.

In my speech I talked more about the work of CSIS agents, the people who work on the ground trying every day to uncover those who want to become terrorists and attack Canada. My goal is to help those agents do their work.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech and thoughtful consideration of the bill.

I have two questions. One, the member mentioned certain things that CSIS would not be able to do without a warrant, but there are a number of things they could do without a warrant. Could the member let the public know about some of those things?

Two, he seemed to suggest that the police and CSIS could not stop a terrorist act that was about to occur. However, as the member probably knows, under the Criminal Code already, with regard to any security legislation, the police, who should of course be working closely with CSIS domestically, can legally stop any criminal act that is about to occur, whether a terrorist act or any other criminal act.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. That is precisely what I would like to know, and that is the point of asking questions.

To our understanding, the proposed changes in Bill C-59 will diminish what CSIS agents can do on the ground. Is there something else that it is trying to say? I would love to know. At the end of the day, if I misunderstood, if my team misunderstood, then so be it, but as far as we can tell the agent will have to get a warrant from a judge before taking direct action to address a situation. That is where we take issue with this bill.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. It is apparent that he is very knowledgeable about the current situation in Canada with respect to all these potential terrorist attacks and the changes occurring all over the world.

Does my colleague really believe that Bill C-59 will improve the protection of honest Canadian citizens? Does it not rather water down the legislation currently in effect in Canada?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

To be perfectly honest, this bill has some good elements. Some of its proposed amendments are sound, and I thank him for them. However, there are some important elements, some details that we need to work on. The devil is always in the details. I am referring to aspects pertaining to CSIS employees; this is of great concern to me.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, today, we begin debating Bill C-59. In fact, we are debating a motion to send the bill to committee before second reading. I will come back to that.

Bill C-59 is the result of a process that began more than two years ago, even before the current government was elected. We know that we can trace this bill to Bill C-51, which was introduced by the Conservatives and then passed by the Conservative majority, with the support of the Liberals, of course, including the current Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Prime Minister.

When I think about the Liberals' approach to national security in the last parliament, an certain expression comes to mind.

[English]

They want to have their cake and eat it too.

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[*Translation*]

That is the problem. It is extremely worrying to see that someone can be so cavalier about an issue as fundamental as the rights of Canadians, their freedom, and their right to privacy. This is what was jeopardized, on several fronts, by the system introduced by the previous Bill C-51. Unfortunately, 10 minutes is not enough for me to review all the problematic elements, so I will instead focus on the Liberal government's effort, which is unfortunately a failure.

[*English*]

Of course, there are some elements that we could support in the current bill. The creation of what some are calling this new body of super SIRC is something we could support. The changes that are being brought forward are long overdue for the no-fly list, although much more needs to be done.

I would be remiss to not mention the importance of the fight we have been waging with groups like the no-fly list kids, fighting the false positives, and making sure the proper funding is there for a proper redress system, which is not something specifically addressed in the bill. It is an element that, at the very least, things have started to move, although not quickly enough for the needs of these families who pay the price in dignity and travel logistics every time they attempt to travel.

[*Translation*]

There are several elements that we are extremely worried about. There is the part about the information sharing system's name change, as the minister even admitted. This change was brought about with the previous Bill C-51. A new name was given and there was a cosmetic change, but the concerns remain the same. That is what we are hearing from groups like the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association. This group explained to us that, despite the good intentions, keeping a system that should have never existed in the first place is problematic. This is why the NDP is asking that the provisions brought about by Bill C-51 be outright repealed. That is what my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke proposed with his Bill C-303, which was put on the Order Paper and was introduced. It proposes to eliminate all these problematic elements.

• (1235)

[*English*]

That is why New Democrats have always called for the full repeal of all elements that were brought in by former Bill C-51. These cosmetic changes that are being proposed by the Liberals are not enough. The concerns still exist about sharing information between government departments. The minister can use the word “disclosure” and say it is already existing information, but the fact of the matter is, if we are considering, for example, a Canadian detained abroad and some of the horrific and tragic situations that have led to many of these national inquiries, which have led to some of the recommendations the government is attempting to act on, part of the problem has always been information sharing. For example, we can look at consular services and foreign affairs, that might be obtaining information about a Canadian detained abroad in a country with a horrible human rights record. That information is being shared with CSIS, that then might share it with the Five Eyes allies, like the U.S., that in the past has not been up to snuff on some cases of the way Canadians have been treated in some of these situations, where

they have been stuck in countries with horrible human rights records. None of that would actually be fixed by what is being proposed in the bill.

[*Translation*]

We have other serious concerns about the bill. One has to do with the changes regarding cybersecurity and, in particular, the idea of creating cyber-weapons. Experts and civil society are very concerned, because the Liberals have not properly explained how these weapons will be protected. We are not talking about traditional weapons that can be stockpiled in a particular location to protect a physical place. We are talking about creating situations in which weapons can easily be moved around the digital world. This point was raised and it is worrisome.

I want to get back to the motion before us. The government is acting as though sending the motion to committee before second reading is a good thing. It claims that the process will allow us to have a more in-depth study. On the surface, it is hard to blame them. We would be happy to have an in-depth discussion on this in committee. It is extremely important.

[*English*]

Consider this. This motion would put us in a position, and the Liberals have attempted to find this loophole, where we can no longer fall back on a standing order specifically to prevent this kind of omnibus legislation from being put forward, once again something the government promised not to do. This is omnibus legislation, the creation of something like three new acts, and many acts being substantially changed. The National Defence Act would change. Different elements of acts under the purview of the public safety minister would change. These disparate elements require separate votes.

The fact is that at 150 pages long, with so many elements being tackled, it is of grave concern that we would have to go through it in such an expedited process. It deserves to be properly separated and considered. That is particularly concerning because that is exactly the approach that the government said it would not take. That was part of the problem with Bill C-51. It changed so many elements of how we would deal with national security and protecting Canadians' rights in this country that it became almost impossible for the committee to give it proper study, despite the valiant attempts that were certainly made by the New Democrat opposition and with little help from the Liberals at the time.

[*Translation*]

I unfortunately have just 10 minutes, so I want to take this opportunity to say that we will be raising a point of order to try to convince the Chair that we must separate the different elements of this bill. We want to show our support for some of these elements, but we want to call the government to order by opposing the elements that were meant to repair the damage caused by the former Bill C-51. These elements make up the bulk of the bill, but they do not repair that damage.

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• (1240)

[English]

Let me go back to some of the other problematic elements in this bill that were supposed to be fixed from Bill C-51. Let us look at the threat-reduction powers that were given to CSIS. The very existence of CSIS was specifically to separate the powers of intelligence gathering and law enforcement. Too many times, history pointed to occasions where the RCMP failed to juggle the dual responsibilities of intelligence gathering and law enforcement. Different recommendations led to the creation of CSIS.

The minister is obviously fully aware of this because, as he mentioned in his comments, the CSIS Act was adopted over 30 years ago, with very little overhaul, until Bill C-51 and this legislation being proposed. We have to understand that CSIS does not have threat reduction powers. That responsibility belongs to law enforcement, as well as the information-sharing regime brought in by Bill C-51. Once again, the changes being proposed by New Democrats are certainly an improvement, but when the bar is as low as it was with Bill C-51, it does not go far enough. These are the types of elements of the previous legislation under the previous government that need to be fully repealed. Unfortunately, CSIS was given this responsibility, which is not part of its mandate and should never have been, to begin with. It is exactly the opposite of why CSIS was created.

[Translation]

I see that my time is unfortunately running out. Since we are debating a motion, we have just 10 minutes to debate a 150-page bill. This is obviously one of the reasons why the elements should have been separated.

We are opposed to this motion. The only solution is to repeal all of the elements in the former Bill C-51.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always like to listen to my colleagues from the New Democratic Party complain that there is not enough in the bill, and that it is simultaneously an omnibus bill. They want more, but if we did more it would be more of an omnibus bill and therefore they would have to be opposed to it. I do not understand that contradiction, but I will let the New Democrats explain it to themselves.

All of the eight chapters are specifically tied to national security. It is not unrelated. It is not like when the Conservatives moved an amendment to the Canadian Marine Act, and then talked about child welfare, then INAC, and then global affairs. These are eight complete chapters integrated with one another and they deal with distinctive measures such as splitting out the youth justice part from the adult justice part and doing it in two separate ways so it can be studied in an important way.

All that aside, in light of the fact that the bill has received the endorsement of Mr. Forcese and Mr. Roach, two of the most distinguished critics of Bill C-51 and in light of the fact that, in particular, Craig Forcese said that this is a real cleanup of the CSIS powers, a reform of the damage done by Bill C-51 to the

independence and the investigative powers of CSIS, would the New Democrats not agree with those leading academics, the very ones they cited in their criticisms of Bill C-51, to support this bill in its entirety and stop complaining about its omnibus nature?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, instead of citing people out of context and using glowing words like “endorsement”, the member could perhaps do more reading and listen to what those same academics said. Mr. Forcese also said that it would require more study because there is a lot in there. He specifically said he has not had time to study the magnitude of some of the important changes being brought to, for example, the National Defence Act with regard to cyber-weapons. I do not understand what that has to do with fixing the no-fly list, but I will let the member justify that.

I want to go back to the fact that the member was in the last Parliament voting with the Conservatives for a bill that threatened Canadians' rights, for a bill that threatened their privacy. We were proud to stand up with his constituents and people in his city who protested that very same bill. The member asked how it was possible that we can complain about it being omnibus but that there is not enough. There is not enough in this bill because it would not repeal the dangerous elements brought in by Bill C-51, the bill from the previous Conservative government that the member voted in favour of. Until we see those things in this kind of legislation, we cannot support it.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad that in his speech the member emphasized on three occasions that the minister is making a lot of changes to the security system. I have two questions, an easy one and then a harder one.

The member mentioned there are a number of things that the NDP would support. Could he just mention one more way that was not in his speech?

The member talked about information gathering, which is a fair comment. However, as he knows, there have been situations in Canada where the information is in various silos, various departments, and various agencies and crimes have been committed that would not have been committed if there were information sharing. Not to retract from the member's suggestion of removing it, how would he then solve that particular problem?

• (1245)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, certainly those elements that I touched on are what I support in this bill. I cannot give much more for the member because there are so many things that we find wrong with the approach that is being taken here.

Government Orders

To get to the question of information sharing, to my knowledge there is no evidence that the information-sharing regime has prevented any attempted terrorist attack from taking place. I will say again what we said in the last Parliament when we opposed Bill C-51. We certainly take the safety of Canadians very seriously. That is why, for example, one of the ways to tackle these issues is to provide proper resources to the RCMP. The RCMP members have long said that they do not have the resources to do their work. Let law enforcement services have the resources to be able to apprehend the people whom they have sufficient evidence against to be able to stop them from committing these kinds of atrocities.

The other thing that is not in the bill and that is fundamental to tackling this issue is a counter-radicalization strategy, something that is grassroots, something that deals with all forms of radicalization leading to violence. I have heard the minister talk at length about it and about different proposals that the Liberals have, but it seems to have stalled and we have not seen very much about that. If they really want a solution to protect Canadian safety, those are the solutions, not legislative solutions that threaten Canadians' rights.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as Minister of National Defence, it gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters.

As my colleague from public security indicated in his earlier speech, Bill C-59 proposes a number of timely and greatly-needed measures to enhance Canada's national security framework, while respecting the constitutional principles enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This commitment to security and the highest standards of democratic accountability is clearly apparent in part 3 of Bill C-59, which would provide the Communications Security Establishment, known as CSE, with the modern tools and authorities it requires to better protect Canadians from foreign threats.

CSE is one of Canada's critical security and intelligence organizations within the National Defence portfolio. However, it is not a household name. Nevertheless, CSE has a long and proud history. Indeed, over the course of the year, CSE has been celebrating its 70th anniversary, reflecting on its proud service to Canadians since the end of World War II.

I want to highlight the key contribution that CSE makes to our safety and security. Its contribution to the protection of Canada's important cyber-infrastructure cannot be underestimated, and its role in protecting Canadians from terrorism is greatly appreciated.

Currently, CSE's important mission is derived from its authorities within its three-part mandate in the National Defence Act.

First, it is Canada's national signals intelligence agency. It serves the national interest by providing foreign signals intelligence in accordance with the government's intelligence priorities.

I want to emphasize that what CSE does is foreign intelligence. By law, it cannot direct its activities at Canadians or anyone in Canada. CSE's intelligence helps prevent terrorist attacks, radicalizing, and training individuals to carry out attacks in Canada and around the world. It protects Canada's deployed military forces. CSE's foreign intelligence informs Canada's government decision-

making in the fields of national security, defence, and international affairs. It provides key insights that help guide Canada and its allies on important issues.

The second part of CSE's mandate is cyber defence and protection. CSE provides advice, guidance, and services to help ensure the protection of electronic information and information infrastructures of importance to the Government of Canada. Its sophisticated cyber and technical expertise helps identify, prepare for, and respond to the most severe cyber-threats and attacks against computer networks and systems, as well as the important information they contain. It helps protect Government of Canada systems from foreign states, hackers, terrorists, and criminals. It tracks cyber-threats from around the world, and works with government departments to defend and strengthen systems against compromise. Finally, CSE helps protect sensitive information held by the government from theft, including the personal information of Canadians.

The third part of CSE's mandate is to provide technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies in the performance of their lawful duties. Under the assistance mandate, those capabilities may be used to assist a Canadian law enforcement or security agency under the requesting agency's legal authority. Security and intelligence agencies require modern capabilities and powers to maintain the security of our country.

In today's dynamic security environment, CSE's efforts to protect Canada and Canadians against threats are more critical than ever.

Under the bill before us, CSE would be given modern cyber authorities and tools to respond to serious foreign threats. As it works to protect Canadians against threats, CSE knows it has a responsibility to protect privacy, and it takes that responsibility very seriously. Indeed, these principles of lawfulness and privacy are critical to the work of CSE. Protecting Canadian privacy is not an afterthought. It is a fundamental part of the organizational culture and is embedded within CSE's operational structures, policies, and processes.

Across our country, and indeed around the world, governments and citizens are relying on evolving technology to communicate, work, and to live.

● (1250)

We expect to be able to interact with our governments in the digital world, and we want to access our government services online.

Government Orders

In recognition of the cyber-revolution, CSE has focused on improving the government's cyber-defences by building specialized cyber-tools and developing resilience within our systems. We are better positioned to resist and protect ourselves against cyber-threats than ever before. However, as new and sophisticated communications technologies emerge, we need to be prepared to protect ourselves from new threats.

This is the world in which CSE works diligently every day to protect our governments, businesses, and our citizens. Because of our sophisticated understanding of the cyberworld, CSE was asked by the Minister of Democratic Institutions to assess the cyber-threats that faced Canada's democratic processes. Also, it was asked for advice about best cyber practices to all political parties in the House.

Trust in our democratic processes is essential for our democracy to work. We have all seen how our democratic processes have been attractive targets for nation states and non-state actors seeking to influence our country. CSE has, throughout its 70-year history, served our country proudly, while adapting to enormous changes in technology and how people use it in the international security environment and in the threat landscape. Today, cyber is clearly a part of that threatened landscape. In responding to this threat, CSE has proven itself to be an innovative leader and a trusted partner.

In the past year, CSE has also taken several unprecedented steps to be more open and transparent about its work for the country, telling Canadians more about the work it does to protect their security, their personal information, their privacy, and their rights and freedoms. It has increased its public outreach through a number of media interviews, participating as speakers in various symposia and conferences, and assisting in other outreach efforts to discuss CSE's mandate and topical issues around security and defence.

I should also like to add that officials from CSE have appeared many times as invited expert witnesses before committees in both Houses.

Many of my hon. colleagues know these officials as dedicated and knowledgeable public servants who are keen to help us understand the complex work that they undertake. No doubt CSE is embracing an open approach to communicating with Canadians about the important work it does.

There can be no greater obligation than to protect the security of Canadians at home and abroad. Bill C-59 would provide CSE with the authorities and tools to maintain the highest standards in security protection while adhering to the high standards of accountability and transparency.

This is a timely and necessary bill. It would serve both Canada's national security interests and adheres to the Canadian principles of accountable government. It would permit our government to take the necessary and appropriate steps to protect Canadians. This is a bill that would enable our government to do so in an open and transparent way. It is a good bill and we will work hard to implement the measures of the proposed legislation.

• (1255)

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that CSE provides foreign intelligence to a

number of Government of Canada departments and agencies to help keep Canada and Canadians safe.

CSE's activities have played an integral role in helping to protect Canada and Canadians against foreign-based terrorism, foreign espionage, cyber-attacks, kidnappings of Canadians abroad, and other serious threats, which has helped to ensure our nation's prosperity, security and stability.

However, the technological world that CSE operates in has changed considerably since its existence was enshrined in legislation in 2001 with the passing of the Anti-terrorism Act. Since then, we have seen the emergence of new threats, as well as changes in the traditional methods and techniques of threat actors. Today there is no shortage of threats to defend against, and every day this dynamic threat environment grows in scale and complexity.

Canadians want and expect their government to protect them from threats. At the same time, they want the agencies charged with protecting them to be more accountable and transparent.

How will the proposed legislation enable CSE to continue to protect Canada and Canadians, and how does it address public demand for increased accountability and transparency on national security?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Speaker, CSE is Canada's centre of excellence for cyber operations operating in a rapidly evolving technological world. CSE's authorities have not kept up with that change. The proposed legislation will enable CSE to work more effectively and proactively to protect Canada and Canadians. It clearly outlines how CSE will be authorized to operate in cyberspace, protecting Canadians at home and abroad from threats to our security, stability, and economic prosperity. It also responds to successive expert recommendations and perspectives raised in national security consultations. The consultations indicated that while Canadians wanted the government to strengthen Canada's ability to address new threats, they also wanted the government to safeguard their rights and freedoms.

As such, the bill would strengthen accountability, oversight and review of CSE's activities, and, for the first time, it would create an intelligence commissioner who would provide independent oversight of CSE's intelligence and cybersecurity activity. It would also establish the national security and intelligence review agency, which would review national security and intelligence activities across the government, including CSE.

These proposed changes will enhance transparency and provide as much information about national security activities to Canadians as possible, without compromising the national interests or effectiveness of operations.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question is about the change that the CSE will now be stood up with its own act rather than functioning under the Department of National Defence and the National Defence Act of Canada. The concern that some may have is that historically CSE was stood up to provide intelligence gathering for our troops that were deployed.

Government Orders

Now that it will be removed under the act and although it will still technically report to the Minister of National Defence are there any apprehensions or concerns that its first and foremost mandate is to protect our troops that serve overseas, often in very dangerous situations, including, as the minister knows full well, our troops serving at NATO and Brussels with the terrorist threat levels there and the need for Canada, through CSE, to collect all the cyber-intelligence possible to protect our troops on the ground?

• (1300)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Speaker, under the National Defence Act, CSE did not have the authority to use its expertise and its ability to provide direct support for CAF. The new CSE legislation would allow CSE to do just that. It actually would enhance the Canadian Armed Forces ability to be better protected and CSE's ability to protect our Canadian men and women in operations.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that they have to be in their own seats if they want to ask questions or have comments on the issue.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise to address Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters.

This is an omnibus bill that is making some significant changes to the way national security is going to be dealt with in this country. It is a huge bill. It is over 140 pages long. It has a great deal of information, some that is quite concerning to us as the official opposition.

I have taken the time to read through the bill, and I am quite concerned about some of the things in here. As I just mentioned to the Minister of National Defence, one of the concerns is around CSE, which has traditionally been an organization that is under the National Defence Act. It has worked alongside our Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that our guys who are deployed are safe. That, in itself, is something that has to be paramount in what CSE continues to do.

The Communications Security Establishment is a great organization and one we support wholeheartedly. It has always respected the laws of Canada. It has worked very closely with our Five Eyes partners—the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand—in collecting intelligence and sharing that where possible. At the same time, it respects Canadians' privacy rights and charter rights to ensure that they are not being unjustly spied on, unless, of course, they are acting in a manner that concerns national security and may be committing some sort of criminal act.

This bill, overall, would weaken our national security in this country. It would change the way CSIS and CSE operate, as well as the RCMP and other police agencies. It proves again that the Liberals are not serious when it comes to public safety. They prefer to water things down rather than do what is right.

It is interesting to watch. We have members on the other side who, when the Liberals were the third party, voted in favour of Bill C-51. Today they are watering down that very act. I have real concerns

about how our allies, particularly our Five Eyes partners, are going to feel about the trustworthiness and interoperability of CSIS, the RCMP, and CSE and their security intelligence-gathering mechanisms.

To highlight this and show that the Liberals are not serious about protecting Canadians and how we deal with terrorism, just this past week, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness said, when talking about Canadians who joined ISIS and became ISIS terrorists and ISIS fighters, that he wants to reintegrate them back into Canada, not charge them under the Criminal Code as terrorists and not charge them under the Criminal Code for committing treason because they are fighting against Canada and our allies in Iraq and Syria. He wants to reintegrate them. That is disgusting.

I have heard over and over again this past week in the riding that Canadians are concerned that the Liberals are putting their lives at risk, because they are going to allow these ISIS fighters to return to Canada. These terrorists who have been radicalized will come back here, and rather than being incarcerated, will have the opportunity to return to their communities and radicalize their families, their friends, and the people they interact with. That is completely unacceptable. That just proves the fact that the Minister of Public Safety and the Liberal government are not taking security seriously.

We can compare that to what the U.S. government is doing, what the government of France is doing, and what the government of the United Kingdom is doing. They have put out kill orders for all their fighters fighting in Syria and Iraq right now. They have been told to shoot to kill anyone who came from Great Britain, the United States, or France who was radicalized and joined ISIS and is in Syria and Iraq fighting their forces. This is to ensure that their public safety is respected.

That is not happening here in Canada. We are going to reintegrate them. We should at least incarcerate them, but no, we are going to reintegrate them.

• (1305)

In the time I have left, I will speak about the Communications Security Establishment. This is an organization that has done yeoman's service over many decades ensuring that our troops stay safe and ensuring that Canada stays safe. Whenever the commissioner for the Communications Security Establishment has looked at ministerial authorizations that have been given, the rights of Canadians have been respected, whether it has been in collecting metadata, in intelligence-sharing, or when there has been a need to issue warrants for the monitoring of Canadians who are directly or indirectly involved in fundraising for, or the activity of, terrorism or other attacks on Canadians on our soil or that of our allies. They have been able to do that and respect our charter rights, respect the Privacy Act, and ensure that Canadians' rights have been respected on a legal level. I think that is clear.

Government Orders

In the new section on the proposed Communications Security Establishment act in Bill C-59, I applaud the government for bringing forward some clear definitions on cyber-defence and cyber-offence. Times have changed. We need to have the ability not only to defend against cyber-attacks but to take out those cyber-attacks and be pre-emptive, if necessary. If they collect the proper intelligence, we would have the ability to go out and destroy that potential threat. It could be an attack on our infrastructure, an attack on the Government of Canada, an attack on our troops serving overseas, or an attack that would wipe out our financial sector. That capability has to be there, because our cyber-infrastructure, such as power, financial institutions, and government institutions, is critical to the everyday lives of Canadians. We have to be able to pre-emptively remove a threat.

The amazing part of everything we are doing is that under this new cyberwarfare process, under “Cyber Operations Authorizations”, in the proposed Communications Security Establishment act, subclause 30(2) would give a veto to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Always the CSE and CSIS have operated in close collaboration with the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of National Defence, and to some degree, the Minister of Justice. Now the Minister of Foreign Affairs would have a veto over whether we spy on individuals or organizations. The minister would have a veto over whether we launch a cyber-attack or defend ourselves from a cyber-attack by individuals and organizations, whether they were criminal organizations, terrorist organizations, drug cartels, or just hackers. This is something we just do not understand.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs does not have the same intelligence mechanisms within the department that the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of National Defence have access to. Why we would give an authorization to the Minister of Foreign Affairs is beyond me. All we have to do is look at the former minister of foreign affairs, Stéphane Dion, who was acting in a role of appeasing Russia, which is definitely the greatest threat to Canada and the Five Eyes allies. If members look at our partners in the Five Eyes, we are always making sure that we have robust cybersecurity and cyber-intelligence-gathering on the Russian Federation, especially those kleptocrats in the Kremlin and those who want to do harm to our alliance through NATO.

We know that Russia is spying on us. We know that China is spying on us, yet when Stéphane Dion was still the minister of foreign affairs, he had the idea that we would appease the Russians, and he would not authorize those types of spying activities. That cannot be allowed to happen.

The current government is trying to do a trade deal with China. Would the government authorize spying and cyber-defence activities against the Government of China? Is the government so caught up in the idea that it wants to do trade with China, despite China's terrible environmental record and the atrocities it is committing against its own citizens, such as the Falun Gong? I am sure the government would appease China.

We need to make sure we get this right. That is why the bill has to get to committee right away. We have to make these changes so the bill is actually in the best interest of Canada and is not about playing political games, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to try to

appease some of the greatest threats to our national security. It is to put our safety first, rather than the government's political aspirations.

● (1310)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have read in detail Bill C-59. As the last speaker mentioned, there are over 140 pages in the bill. There are some good parts in this legislation, but there are parts I have a lot of concern about. One is the limits the bill would place on the ability of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to reduce terrorist threats in Canada. It bothers me that we would start pulling some of its authority and some of its ability to effectively make Canada safer for the public. The bill would limit the ability of government departments to share data among themselves to protect Canada's national security.

The hon. member talked about ISIS fighters coming back to Canada and the fact that we have a government that is not going to take a strong stand on this. It should be taking a strong stand.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on the ability of our government agencies to share information about the people coming back. Do we just want them to filter into our communities?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I have full confidence in the intelligence-gathering processes in Bill C-51, which we passed in a previous Parliament, in 2015. That piece of legislation allowed for information-sharing between CBSA, the RCMP, CSIS, CSE, and the Department of Foreign Affairs. I think most Canadians just assumed this had already been taking place. With government, everything always operates in silence. When we can level things off and allow information-sharing to percolate through all departments, we do a much better job of protecting Canadians, whether it is at the border, at the ports, or on our own turf.

I have a concern about returning ISIS fighters and the whole policy of reintegration rather than incarceration for these people. I think all of us are concerned about that. That is why Bill C-59 has to be studied in great detail, with expertise, so amendments can be made to the bill so that this legislation does not actually become reality.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was here when the previous government brought in Bill C-51, and there was a great deal of resistance to it from every region of our country. The Liberals ended up supporting that piece of legislation, recognizing that it would become part of our election platform in terms of the need to make changes. This legislation would enable some of those changes.

Government Orders

I would ask the member across the way why the Conservative Party does not seem to understand or appreciate the need to have a parliamentary oversight group, when the other countries in the Five Eyes already have them? That is one of the fundamental flaws of Bill C-51. The Conservatives are out of touch with what the other countries are doing, such as Australia and the U.S.A, and recognizing the importance of having an interparliamentary oversight committee, which would guarantee the rights of Canadians. Why do the Conservatives continuously oppose that?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, it is unbelievable. The member for Winnipeg North always stands up and puts politics ahead of sound policy and politics ahead of public safety. Here he has proven it again, saying they only voted for Bill C-51 because it was going to be a wedge issue in the last campaign. That is why the Liberals should never have won the last election, because that is the type of mentality they have.

The member talked about parliamentary oversight. If we are going to have parliamentary oversight, let us do it right. Let us do it like they do in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, where they swear them in to Privy Council, where they have access to everything.

The Liberals put on a facade of so-called taking an oath, yet everything is still censored by the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice, and the Prime Minister himself.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about this important bill.

Earlier today, the Minister of Public Safety said that a government has no greater responsibility than keeping its people safe. These people live in our ridings. They are our colleagues, our neighbours, family friends, even our own children. The public safety minister is absolutely right. All governments around the world are responsible for keeping their people safe. That is a weighty and fundamental responsibility that must be taken seriously.

However, the minister was unable to add that the government's responsibility to protect people's freedoms is just as important. It has been obvious from the get-go that the government's approach is skewed toward security and policing and that it is much less interested in talking about the importance of protecting our freedoms.

As citizens who are privileged to live in a democratic society where we can vote and say what we want and enjoy freedom of expression and freedom of association, we must never forget what a long, hard road it has been to get here. We must resist any attempt to undo our progress by taking away any of our rights and freedoms. Bill C-59 is shocking in several ways, considering it comes from the party that authored the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This worries us, as progressive New Democrats and as democrats.

Bill C-59 continues the Liberal Party's two-faced tradition of saying one thing and doing the opposite. The Liberals can advocate one thing and then make decisions that oppose it. The member for Winnipeg North has just demonstrated this perfectly by reminding us

that Bill C-51 was strongly opposed by civil society organizations, experts, and defenders of civil liberties, and yet the Liberal Party, with an eye on the upcoming election, voted in favour of Bill C-51 because it would help the party on the campaign trail. It is hard to follow the Liberals' logic at any given point in time. They are not consistent.

It is too bad that we are dealing with a government that plays politics, waffles, contradicts itself, and is sometimes incredibly hypocritical. We can blame the previous Conservative government for a lot of things, but a lack of consistency is not one of them, even though we were often strongly opposed to its decisions.

The Liberals' habit of talking out of both sides of their mouths is not just affecting our security intelligence agencies and police forces. It is as though we have been listening to a broken record for the past two years. The Liberals have been saying that Canada is back on the world stage and that they are going to take tougher action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, we can see that this is all a sham. The Liberals have adopted the same plan as the Harper Conservatives and are approving pipelines left and right, which is obviously going to increase our greenhouse gas emissions. The Liberals are saying one thing and doing another.

The Liberals talk about an open and transparent government, but the changes they are making to the Access to Information Act will make it more difficult and complicated to follow that approach. The Liberals are saying that they want to restore people's confidence in public institutions, but then ministers are hosting cash-for-access fundraisers at \$1,500 a ticket.

What is happening today is therefore just another example of the Liberals playing politics at the expense of Canadians' safety and security. They are merely tinkering with Bill C-51, when the NDP and others believe it should be repealed. We need to start from square one and draft a good bill that makes Canadians safer, since that is absolutely essential.

• (1320)

We want to do everything we can to prevent terrorists and other ill-intentioned people from coming here and plotting or preparing attacks or violence against Canadians. We also want to give our democratic institutions and watchdogs the tools needed to watch the watchers. If this is not done properly, we could see a shift towards a police state that infringes on our privacy and digs through our personal lives to gather a bunch of information, even when there is no reason to suspect someone of wanting or attempting to do anything wrong.

We believe that Bill C-51 jeopardized our privacy, our freedom of expression, and our freedom of association. Unfortunately, Bill C-59 does not do what it takes to correct that. The Liberals have missed the mark. A few of these measures might be worthwhile, but overall, the Liberals are continuing the dangerous trend we saw under the previous Conservative government.

The new oversight and review mechanisms are limited and do not offset the exchange and sharing of information and almost unlimited powers within our security agencies. This is a major concern.

Government Orders

There is something rather ironic about what I am going to say, but it must be said as it is of great concern to us. In November 2016, or last year, the Federal Court handed down a ruling with respect to the massive collection of data by CSIS. It had illegally kept personal electronic data for more than 10 years. In its rather scathing and very clear ruling, Justice Simon Noël stated that CSIS breached its duty to inform the court of this data collection since the information was gathered using judicial warrants.

CSIS should not have retained the information since it was not directly related to threats to the security of Canada. That is important. That is a very real example that highlights all the concerns of people who wonder what type of information will be collected about them, who will have access to this information, and to whom this information will be communicated and transferred. In November 2016, the Federal Court pointed out that there can be exaggerations. This is not a figment of the imagination. It happened here.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness quickly reacted and said that the government took note of this and would not appeal this decision. Oh, okay. That is a good sign. Perhaps it is a step in the right direction. Oh, wait. Surprise! In Bill C-59, the Liberal government responds to the Federal Court decision in a strange way when it comes to our privacy protections. The new law will allow CSIS to collect huge amounts of metadata containing confidential information about Canadians that is not relevant to its investigations.

The November 2016 Federal Court ruling stated that CSIS did not have the right to do so, and that it was illegal. Bill C-59 makes it legal. People need to understand that if Bill C-59 is passed, CSIS will be able to collect huge amounts of metadata containing confidential information about Canadians that is not relevant to its investigations. These are the kinds of things that make it impossible for us to fall in line with the Liberal government. Yes, we are happy that we can study Bill C-59 more closely, but we are sounding a warning bell.

We are telling Quebecers and Canadians in general to be careful, because there are elements in this bill that will increase police surveillance. We are going to be spied on more, and we do not know who is going to end up with the information.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we will wait to see what happens when the bill ultimately goes to committee. I suspect that the New Democrats will likely have some amendments they will bring forward.

It is important that we recognize that Canadians want to feel safe. They understand that Canada and the national government have a role to play, and this piece of legislation is very sound. We are having it go to committee before second reading. That is a very progressive move, allowing us to expand the legislation's potential scope.

Could the member across the way give some specifics on how he wants to see the legislation improved?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, of course Canadians want to feel safe, but they also want to feel free and not as if they are being spied on all the time. Having a good watchdog to oversee the police who are watching us is crucial, but that is lacking in the bill right now. We will see if Liberals are open to accepting some important amendments.

[Translation]

I would also like to mention the fact that there is something missing in Bill C-59. It does not mention the new directive introduced in October 2017. This is a government directive on public safety and emergency preparedness that says that Canada does not condone torture and that it does not practise torture. We agree that this is a very good thing. However, what is missing and what is not amended in Bill C-59 is that we will not under any circumstances use information that other countries might have obtained through torture.

This is like saying that we are against torture, but that we reserve the right to use information that was obtained through torture in other countries. Generally speaking, information obtained through torture is worthless, since people being tortured will say anything. This also destroys our principled stand on the serious issue of torture based on our values as Canadians.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, if anything was clear in the last Parliament with respect to Bill C-51, it was that the New Democrats opposed it for their own reasons of principle, and yet we find out today from the parliamentary secretary that the Liberals only opposed it for political purposes, so they could use it as a wedge issue in the last election.

I want to speak to the issue of committees. The hon. member knows this bill will go to committee and that there will be some proposed amendments from this side of the House, both the official opposition and the third party. Not to be cynical, we know that the government controls committees. How confident is the member that any proposed amendment will be taken up by the government, and perhaps used to change this legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

My answer will be brief. Unfortunately, I do not have much hope, since, despite the government's promises to co-operate, collaborate, and be more open and democratic, that is not what we have been seeing in the past two years with the constant use of its parliamentary majority to crush the opposition. Let us hope that, because of the scope of the issue, this time it will be different.

I would like to draw my colleague's attention, and the attention of everyone listening, to the fact that the text of Bill C-59 concerning the definition of "activity that undermines the security of Canada" includes "significant or widespread interference with critical infrastructure".

Government Orders

The NDP is concerned that interference with critical infrastructure might result in authorizing secret services to spy on people who intend to protest the construction of new pipelines. With a government that has just given its support to Kinder Morgan and Keystone XL, we are concerned that Bill C-59 could be targeting peaceful, ecologically minded, or indigenous protesters.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak in support of the national security act, 2017, Bill C-59. Two years ago, our government came to Ottawa with the promise that it would address the numerous problematic elements of Bill C-51, which was enacted by the previous government. Canadians agreed that in attempting to safeguard the security of Canada, Bill C-51 failed to strike a balance between security and freedom.

Today I am proud to be able to rise in this House and say that we have wholeheartedly delivered our commitment to addressing those problem areas. Our government began its commitment to achieving this goal by first reaching out to Canadians in an unprecedented consultation process, where all agreed that accountability, transparency, and effectiveness are needed from their security agencies.

Secondly, Bill C-22 was passed earlier this year, which created the multi-party National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It is tasked with reviewing national security and intelligence activities through unprecedented access, with the goal of promoting government-wide accountability. On November 6, our Prime Minister followed through on this commitment by announcing the members of the committee. Today we are debating the national security act, 2017, Bill C-59, the last step in achieving our commitment to improving those problematic elements of Bill C-51. This package consists of three acts, five sets of amendments, and a comprehensive review process.

In creating the national security and intelligence review agency, the office of the intelligence commissioner, and the Communications Security Establishment, we have created the robust and effective national security establishment that Canadians have asked for. In addition, we are amending the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act, and the Secure Air Travel Act to strengthen the role of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, limit the collection of personal information, safeguard Canadian rights to peaceful assembly, and fix problems with the no-fly list.

Finally, our amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act would ensure young persons would be provided with all appropriate child protection, mental health, and other social measures needed when faced with a terrorism-related offence. Through my work on the mental health caucus, I know how important it is for all Canadians, especially those of marginalized groups, to have access to all available safeguards, services, and measures when navigating the criminal justice system. Therefore, I am pleased to speak today specifically about these proposed amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act included in part 8 of the national security act, 2017.

My riding of Richmond Hill is an incredibly diverse and vibrant riding, where over half of my constituents are Canadians from an

immigrant background. Of these, the majority are youths and young families under the age of 30. For this reason, I am proud to say that through this set of amendments, our government is taking action to ensure that all youth involved in the criminal justice system are afforded the enhanced protections provided by Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act, while also holding them accountable for their actions.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act, or YCJA, is the federal law that governs Canada's youth aged 12 to 17 who commit criminal offences, including terrorism offences. The YCJA recognizes that the youth justice system should be separate from the adult system, and based on the principle of diminished moral blameworthiness of youth. It emphasizes rehabilitation and reintegration, just and proportionate responses to offending, and enhanced procedural protections for youth. The act also recognizes the importance of involving families, victims, and communities in the youth criminal justice system. The YCJA contains a number of significant legal safeguards to ensure that young people are treated fairly and that their rights are fully protected, for example, the identity publication ban, and significant restrictions on access to youth records.

• (1335)

Young people also have enhanced right to counsel, including state-provided counsel, and the right to have parents or other guardians present throughout key stages of the investigation and judicial processes. If a young person is charged, all proceedings take place in youth court. In addition, the YCJA would establish clear restrictions on access to youth records, setting out who may access youth records, the purpose for which youth records may be used, and the time periods during which access to records is permitted. Generally speaking, although the offences set out in the Criminal Code apply to youth, the sentences do not. Instead, the YCJA sets out specific youth sentencing principles, options, and durations. There is a broad range of community-based youth sentencing options, and clear restrictions on the use of custodial sentences.

Turning now to Bill C-59, it is important to recognize that there have been very few cases in Canada in which a young person has been involved in the youth criminal justice system due to terrorism offences. In total, we have had six young people charged since 2002. Two were found guilty, three were put under a peace bond, and one had the charges dropped. Nonetheless, it is important to ensure that when this occurs, the young people are held to account, but also that they are afforded all of the enhanced protection under the YCJA. It is perhaps even more important in terrorism-related offences that we do everything in our power to reform young offenders so that future harm is prevented.

Government Orders

Part 8 of Bill C-59 would amend the provision of the YCJA to ensure that youth protections apply in relation to anti-terrorism and other recognizance orders. It also provides for access to youth records for the purpose of administering the Canadian Passport Order, subject to the special privacy protections set out in the YCJA. The bill would also make important clarifications with respect to recognizance orders. Although the YCJA already provides youth justice courts with the authority to impose these orders, several sections of the YCJA would be amended to state more clearly that youth justice courts have exclusive jurisdiction to impose recognizance on youth. This would eliminate any uncertainty about the applicability of certain rights of protection, including the youths' right to counsel. In addition, there is currently no access period identified for records relating to recognizance. Therefore, the YCJA would be amended to provide that the access period for these records would be six months after the order expires.

With respect to the Canadian Passport Order, Bill C-59 would amend the YCJA to specifically permit access to youth records for the purpose of administering Canada's passport program. The Canadian Passport Order contemplates that passports can be denied or revoked as a result of certain criminal acts, or in relation to national security concerns. For example, section 10.1 of the Canadian Passport Order stipulates that the minister of public safety may decide to deny or revoke a passport if there are reasonable grounds, including that revocation is necessary to prevent the commission of a terrorism offence, or for the national security of Canada or a foreign country or state.

The current YCJA provisions governing access to youth records do not speak to access for passport matters. As noted, Bill C-59 would allow access in appropriate circumstances. However, it is important to note that the sharing of youth information on this provision would still be subject to the special privacy protection of the YCJA. Canadians can be assured that our government is addressing the national security threat while continuing to protect democratic values, rights, and freedoms for Canadians. Those two goals must be pursued with equal dedication.

I encourage all my colleagues to vote in support of the bill.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I am wondering what the hon. member would hope to see by sending the bill to committee before second reading. Second, will the government be open to changes from the opposition side that are reasonable, practical, and that would enhance the measures in this bill?

• (1340)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, our government is committed, through the committee, to a process of taking everybody's input, taking all the members' input, assessing the changes, and implementing those as amendments if and when required.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would also like to speak to this unbelievable mess for those Canadians who are listening. We are not even going to go to the second reading of the bill right away. We will be sending the government's bill directly to committee, because it is so bad. Why did the government introduce the bill if it is so flawed? Why will it not withdraw the bill and introduce a better one? It makes no sense.

I hope that the hon. member will agree that all torture-related directives must be removed from the bill. We cannot say that we do not condone obtaining information through torture in Canada, but that we will use information obtained through torture in another country. We cannot wash our hands of the implications. We must hold a strong principled stand against torture here in Canada and around the globe. We cannot accept this.

Does my colleague agree?

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, I am focusing my comments on the amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the recognizance with conditions.

To that end, our goal is to strike a balance between the safety and liberty of those who are caught in the criminal justice system, especially youths.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's riding is right beside my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. I would like to thank my colleague for the incredible work he is doing with youth, and particularly in light of this Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Could the member give us some perspective on the balance between safeguarding society and giving our youth a just and proportionate response for their actions, which has been reflected in this revised act? In his opinion, what would be the three key elements that differentiate and improve upon this act that will make the biggest difference?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, those are great questions.

I would like to start by highlighting some of the changes that are being proposed. Part 8 of Bill C-59 would amend certain provisions of the YCJA to ensure that youth protection applies in relation to recognizance orders, including recognizance with conditions and peace bond proceedings.

First, we are bringing in protection and making sure that protection is recognized when it is needed. Second, these amendments clarify that the youth justice court has exclusive jurisdiction to impose these orders on youth, and eliminates any uncertainty about the applicability of certain provisions to a youth for whom a recognizance order is being sought. Third, in addition, there is currently no access period. What this bill is proposing as an amendment to YCJA is to make sure we have six months after the expiry date of the order, limiting the time that the youth record can be ordered.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise at this stage of our study of Bill C-59.

Nine days ago, on Remembrance Day, November 11, all Canadians, including MPs, were united in our thoughts. Hundreds of commemorative events took place on that day. Personally, in my riding, I commemorated Remembrance Day in the indigenous community of Wendake with my 94-year-old father, a World War II veteran.

I am mentioning this because Remembrance Day unites all Canadians, and especially because it reminds us that Canada has always been on the right side of history. Canada has always fought the enemies of freedom and defended the values that it holds dear and that unite us. In World War I and World War II, the enemy was a nation, a country. It had a uniform and a flag. It displayed its colours. Today, the enemy is everywhere and nowhere all at once. The enemy is terrorism.

That is why we must fight this enemy with all our energy and necessary tools. That is why I wanted to draw a parallel between the hundreds of thousands of Canadians and soldiers around the world who made the ultimate sacrifice by laying down their young lives to fight the enemies of freedom and those who, today, in the 21st century, fight the enemies of our core principles, the terrorists.

The world changed on September 11, 2001. When terrorism reared its ugly head and attacked our neighbour and ally, the United States, the world took drastic action to combat terrorism. Since terrorism is cowardly and hypocritical, and since the enemy has no pride or honour and does not follow rules, terrorists are always everywhere, insidious, masked, hiding in the shadows and waiting in ambush, because they have no honour or even the courage to defend their beliefs honourably. We must therefore fight the enemy with information and, here in Canada, with CSIS.

The enemy has struck south of the border, and it has struck here as well. Thirty-seven months ago, almost to the day, the enemy came right up to the door of the House of Commons in Ottawa, and we lived through a tragic and horrible act of terrorism. That is why the Conservative government at the time, with the help of several individuals, took the necessary measures to combat terrorism in Canada by introducing Bill C-51, which was sponsored by the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, then minister of public safety, and by the hon. Peter MacKay, then minister of justice.

Some were in agreement with the bill, while others opposed it. I would like once again to point out the cohesiveness of the NDP, as the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie was saying. We do not agree, but they, like us, are consistent. Curiously, the people who now make up the government voted in favour of the bill. We were happy, but a few months later, during the election campaign, those same people got all worked up about Bill C-51, saying that it made no sense. They said that, if they were elected, they would properly restore order and discipline. It took them 18 months to come up with Bill C-59, which they introduced at the very end of the session last June. If I remember correctly, it was June 17, just before we returned to our ridings to work with our constituents.

This bill is nothing short of massive. It proposes to amend nine acts over as many chapters, for a total of some 140 pages. It is what we might call a mammoth bill or an omnibus bill, but let us set political rhetoric aside and get to the meat of the matter.

• (1345)

Why, in our opinion, should this bill be studied?

On this side of the House, we believe that CSIS agents should be given all the tools they need to detect and eradicate terrorism. It is the best course of action.

If I spoke of Remembrance Day at the top of my speech, that was to remind the House that, today, our enemy hides in the shadows. The enemy is a hypocrite, a coward. It knows no religion or law. It has no flag. It is everywhere and nowhere all at once. We must therefore allocate the resources needed to root it out. We must provide all necessary tools to law enforcement working to eradicate terrorism should it ever rear its ugly head in Canada.

We believe that the bill will make the work of CSIS agents more difficult, because they will have to work harder to convince judges to give them the authority they need to take action. This is true for several measures, whether for “altering, removing, replacing, destroying, disrupting or degrading a [terrorist] communication or means of communication”, or for “altering, removing, replacing, destroying, degrading or providing—or interfering with the use or delivery of—any thing or part of a thing, including records, documents, goods, components and equipment”. Wars hinge on such things.

If we want to eradicate terrorism, we must allow our police officers to address terrorist activity directly, by intercepting the transmission of communications and documents.

The same applies when it comes to “fabricating or disseminating any information, record or document”.

The same also applies when it comes to “making or attempting to make, directly or indirectly, any financial transaction that involves or purports to involve currency or a monetary instrument”.

These people are not living hand to mouth. They are extremely well paid, in fact. We must locate the source of their funding.

It is the same when it comes to “interrupting or redirecting, directly or indirectly, any financial transaction...interfering with the movement of any person; and personating a person, other than a police officer, in order to take a measure referred to in [the previous act]”.

What that means is that, with Bill C-59 and its proposed new measures, the current government is making the work of police officers who risk their lives every time they try to flush out terrorists. That is our concern.

Statements by Members

It is the same thing with cyber-attacks. Bill C-59 sets out the government's plan to protect Canadians from the terrorist enemy's attacks via Internet, or what are known as cyber-attacks. The government needs to take measures that can directly thwart the enemy and cause it to back down when it comes to cyber-attacks.

Oddly enough, the government is giving the Minister of Foreign Affairs veto power in this regard. Why? Why give veto power to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and not the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice, or the Minister of Transport?

If, God forbid, the enemy wanted to undermine our air travel security, for example, why would the foreign affairs minister have veto over whether we launch a cyber-attack against the terrorists? We do not understand the reasoning behind this measure.

That is why we have serious concerns about this bill, which will also affect our foreign relations with our main partners, friends, and allies in the battle all democracies are waging against terrorism. Three weeks ago, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles talked about a sad reality, and that is the fact that 60 members of the Taliban who fought against our troops in Afghanistan have come back to Canada. That is like Canada welcoming 60 members of the SS immediately following the Second World War. That would have been unspeakable. For all of those reasons, we have reservations regarding this bill.

• (1350)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague pointed out the fact that over the previous week, many of us in this chamber had the opportunity to participate in remembrance services across our ridings to thank our men and women in uniform for standing up for the freedoms we enjoy today. He also pointed out that Bill C-59 makes it more difficult for our security and police officers to intercept emerging threats.

However, one of the most disturbing comments I heard this past weekend is what appears to be an attempt to rebrand these terrorists who are returning to Canada as simply “returning foreign terrorist travellers”. Does my colleague have any comments to make on this attempt to rebrand a group of people we should be doing everything we can to keep out of our country?

• (1355)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his interesting comment that some people in his riding raised the issue of terrorists returning to Canada. This is totally unacceptable.

The member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles asked the Prime Minister a direct question three weeks ago about how he could accept the fact that 60 terrorists who fought our men and women and others in Afghanistan are now welcome back in Canada. It is as if in July 1945, 60 “SS” members headed back to Canada. This is totally unacceptable, especially for all of those who sacrificed so much for our country and our freedom.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague asked why the Minister of Foreign Affairs has a veto power. We know that much terrorism happens

internationally, as does the cyber-activity we see, which has international connections as well.

Does he not feel that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the international and domestic knowledge to achieve this particular mandate?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, why should we give a veto to the minister of international affairs and not to the security minister? The public safety minister is a key player in this field. The same goes for the justice minister and also for the transport minister, whom we support and who is responsible for the coordination of safety and transportation in Canada, especially with respect to airports and airplanes.

Thus, we are very surprised to see that the veto belongs to only one person instead of all the people who are as involved as this member should be.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, does my colleague see anything odd about a government being so embarrassed by its own bill that it wants to send it to committee right away to have it amended? That seems odd to me.

Usually, when one introduces a bill, one makes sure that it is as well-written as possible, and then minor amendments can be made. If it is that badly written, maybe the Liberals should scrap it instead of skipping second reading and sending it directly to committee. Maybe they should rewrite the whole thing.

Is this the kind of thing we see often? This government seems to be making it up as it goes along.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. As I said, the NDP has been absolutely consistent on this file, and the Conservative Party has been just as consistent. The Liberal Party, in contrast, is completely inconsistent.

For example, as the member astutely pointed out, the government introduced a mammoth 140-page, nine-part bill, which it now wants to send to committee before it even goes through second reading. Not only that, but it took the government 18 months to produce this voluminous document that, strangely enough, would override the act the Liberals voted for in February 2015. This is Liberal inconsistency at its finest.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

PRINT MEDIA

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, at the annual conference of the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec held last weekend, Hill correspondent Christopher Nardi was awarded the Arthur-Prévost prize, which celebrates young journalists.

Statements by Members

Congratulations, Mr. Nardi. I have no doubt that you have a wonderful career ahead of you, but in order for that to happen, the government needs to have a little more vision. Print media is apparently outdated, or at least that seems to be what the Minister of Canadian Heritage thinks. She seems to think that journalism is important only to the extent that it provides a return on investment for shareholders. What she needs to understand, however, is that in this age of fake news and considering the global rise of populism, print media is more important than ever. It is the watchdog of democracy, and also keeps the ruling class honest and ethical.

Rather than paying off the shareholders of multinational entertainment companies, the minister should take a lesson from the quality of Mr. Nardi's work and invest in preserving a print media industry that is strong, free, and at the service of people in all regions.

* * *

• (1400)

[English]

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is Financial Literacy Month and I am delighted to thank all ministers, senators, and members who dropped by the reception, hosted by the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada on Parliament Hill, the first-ever kickoff event since Financial Literacy Month was established in 2011.

[Translation]

Approximately 20 representatives of financial literacy organizations set up kiosks to explain their mission and mark Financial Literacy Month, which is held every November. This year's theme is "It pays to know!". As a financial literacy expert, it was an honour for me to sponsor this event to promote the financial well-being of all Canadians.

[English]

This was a terrific opportunity to highlight our national strategy for financial literacy and to talk about ways we could update it by applying the GBA+ lens.

* * *

NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSAL

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently we celebrated the 60th anniversary of bringing the National Research Universal, or the NRU, online at Chalk River in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. As the longest-serving nuclear research reactor in the world, the NRU has made substantial contributions to every area of scientific research worldwide.

The NRU allowed for the creation of a brand new field: nuclear medicine. Through research and the creation of medical isotopes, 60 million patients a year and over half a billion patients since 1957 have been treated with isotopes from the NRU. Design and testing of the CANDU nuclear power reactor took place at the NRU. Now over half of Ontario's power is greenhouse gas emission-free nuclear power. Sadly, the NRU is scheduled to end operations in 2018, with no replacement in the works.

I invite all members to join me in congratulating the people who worked with the NRU for their many years of dedication.

* * *

[Translation]

LOUIS RIEL

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every November 16, Manitoba's Métis community gathers at the Saint Boniface Cathedral cemetery to commemorate the anniversary of Louis Riel's death. One of the great leaders of his day, Louis Riel stood up for the rights of the Métis and francophones when Manitoba joined Confederation.

[English]

Indeed, Louis Riel is the father of Manitoba, and we gather to commemorate his death every year in Saint-Boniface.

I stand here today in the House of Commons and remember that Louis Riel was never allowed this privilege. In spite of being elected three times as MP for Provencher, Riel was never granted access to this chamber.

Therefore, it is with great pride that as a Métis member of Parliament, I recognize and honour Louis Riel today. We are a government that will continue to make great progress in reconciling errors of the past with the Métis nation.

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UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, November 20, is Universal Children's Day. In 1954, the day was set aside by the United Nations to promote international awareness of children's issues and to remind us of our obligation to improve child welfare worldwide.

Universal Children's Day offers the opportunity to advocate, inspire, promote, and celebrate children's rights. It is our responsibility to engage in actions to create a better world for our children.

As a member of the all-party anti-poverty caucus, I invite MPs to join in a breakfast panel discussion on child poverty in Canada, in room 256-S Centre Block, tomorrow morning. Everyone is welcome. The panellists are from Campaign 2000, Bread Not Stones, and Citizens for Public Justice. These groups work with all parties to fulfill Ed Broadbent's motion, passed unanimously in this House in 1989, to end child poverty by the year 2000 all across this country.

Mr. Speaker, do not let them tell you it cannot be done.

*Statements by Members***TOBIAS ENVERGA**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Senator Tobias Enverga was the first Filipino Canadian elected in the GTA, and in 2012 he became the first senator of Filipino heritage. Shortly after he was appointed to the Senate, I had the pleasure to meet him in my role as a vice chair of the Canada-Philippines Parliamentary Friendship Group.

The senator did a lot of fine work in the Senate, in particular on the issue of persons with disabilities. For me, it was his leadership in bringing Filipino heritage to Parliament Hill where I got to know him.

As co-chairs of the Philippine friendship group, the Senator and I worked together in ensuring there was a special celebration recognizing Philippine independence every year on Parliament Hill. To be fair, he was the one that really drove the event.

Recently, I had 100 visitors from St Peter's Church in Winnipeg here, and 90% of them were of Filipino heritage. Senator Enverga happily took us into the Senate chamber, and we could see the immense pride from the people in the group as they sat in his chair and posed for pictures with the late senator.

Senator Enverga was a true Canadian who embraced our diversity. He will be missed.

On behalf of my colleagues, I offer our condolences and prayers to his wife Rosemer, his three daughters, other family members, and many friends.

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●(1405)

NOLAN CARIBOU

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness I rise today to honour the life of Corporal Nolan Caribou. Corporal Caribou was killed yesterday during a training accident at CFB Shilo.

Corporal Caribou was a reservist and an infantryman in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles of the 38th Canadian Brigade.

The training of Canadian Armed Forces members is integral to the defence of our country. This training can be risky, but helps ensure the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces. CFB Shilo is a main training hub and helps train the men and women of the Canadian Forces to ensure they are prepared to defend our country and our values, at home and abroad.

The loss of Corporal Nolan Caribou is a large blow to the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, also known as the Little Black Devils. He will be missed at the armoury, at the parade hall, and in the lives of the men and women he served with.

May the motto of his regiment, "*Hosti Acie Nominati*", "named by the enemy", remain in the hearts of all with whom he served.

On behalf of the official opposition and all parliamentarians, I extend our sincerest condolences to Corporal Caribou's family, colleagues, and loved ones.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, The Neighbourhood Group has provided support to Toronto neighbourhoods since 1911, including in Beaches—East York. Its mission is to serve people at every stage of their lives, and to promote independence and dignity.

In the last year, The Neighbourhood Group's staff and its 1,300 dedicated volunteers have helped 31,000 clients across Toronto through 47 unique programs. These include personal support home care for over 2,000 people, helping almost 7,000 vulnerable people obtain lost or stolen ID, delivering over 28,000 meals, serving an additional 6,000 meals, and helping 759 people find work and 224 return to school. The organization has also sponsored and supported three Syrian refugee families.

Recently, our government has committed over \$1 million in funding over 29 months to The Neighbourhood Group to support its youth works program. Since 2011, this program has helped youth, through skills training and work experience, to become gainfully employed and financially independent.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking The Neighbourhood Group for the important role it continues to play across our city and in Beaches—East York.

* * *

HOLODOMOR

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, beginning today and continuing this week, the Ukrainian community, along with many Canadians, are commemorating the millions of victims of the 1932-33 Holodomor genocide and the forced starvation of millions of Ukrainians by Stalin's dictatorship.

I encourage all members to join me today in visiting the Holodomor national awareness tour mobile bus classroom, located just at the foot of East Block, for an interactive education on the genocide, and to attend the special commemoration this evening at 6:30 p.m. in Centre Block, in room 238-S.

Please join me in giving a heartfelt thanks to Bohdan Onyschuk and my uncle, Denny Dzerowicz, for their leadership and vision in creating the mobile classroom with the aim of increasing Holodomor awareness across Canada. I thank them and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for ensuring that the memory of those who died will never be forgotten and for reminding us that we each play a role not only in fighting hate and discrimination everywhere in the world, but in promoting the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Vichnaya Pamyat

*Statements by Members***CANADA 150 AWARD**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to pay tribute to the legendary Lowell Green. Lowell's millions of radio listeners know him for his strong and well-researched arguments, but there is more.

Parliament owes him a debt of gratitude.

Fifty years ago he led the campaign to make the centennial flame permanent. He co-founded Big Brothers of Ottawa and brought the city its Santa Claus parade, which provides many gifts to children who would otherwise have none. He worked for the drug addiction research council to help struggling youth turn their lives around. He even raised \$200,000 to help young Aiden receive life-saving and rare medical treatment south of the border.

For that, the Senate will award Lowell the Canada 150 Award this week.

On behalf of Parliament, the citizens of Carleton, and people across the Ottawa Valley, a well-deserved thanks to Lowell Green and congratulations.

* * *

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

COLLÈGE MONTMORENCY BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the proud member for Alfred-Pellan in Laval, I want to acknowledge the presence on Parliament Hill of the Nomades, the men's basketball team from Collège Montmorency in Laval. I want to take this opportunity to point out how important athletics are, as well as the positive impact they have on our young people, who learn about discipline, rigour, and team spirit. Collège Montmorency's Nomades are the national champions of the Canadian Colleges Athletic Association men's basketball championship.

[*English*]

They will defend their title on home court as next season they will host the CCAA Men's Basketball National Championship, from March 14 to 17, 2018.

I would like to thank the coaches who help our athletes reach their full potential. I am confident the Nomades will give us a breathtaking performance next March.

Please join me in congratulating them on their national champion's title and welcoming them on the Hill.

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ORDER OF CANADA

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, established in 1967 to highlight the contributions of incredible Canadians, the Order of Canada is our country's highest civilian honour. It is why I am fiercely proud to recognize an individual who has worked tirelessly to build and strengthen his community, Nova Scotia, and all of Canada.

Chief Terrance Paul of Membertou First Nation has dedicated his life to ensuring his constituents have a better and brighter future. For

over three decades, Chief Paul has served as a leader and member of indigenous advisory committees and has championed the preservation of language and history through education.

Membertou is flourishing and due to Chief Paul's leadership, Membertou First Nation had the honour of becoming the first indigenous community in the world to be certified under the International Organization for Standardization for recognition of its efficient and sustainable growth.

Last week, Chief Paul was invested into the Order of Canada, recognized for his outstanding achievements, dedication to his community, and service to the nation.

I congratulate Chief Paul and the 43 great Canadians who received this honour.

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[*Translation*]

BUSINESSES IN RICHMOND—ARTHABASKA

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk a number of businesses in my region that were recently recognized for their excellence at various galas. At the Prix Créateurs d'emplois du Québec gala on October 4, two businesses from my riding brought home some prestigious awards. Les Canards du Lac Brome d'Asbestos won the prestigious Coup de coeur et créateur de prospérité award, and the Anderson Group in Chesterville won an award in the Champions category.

A short while later, on November 9, at the gala for the Le Manufacturier de la Mauricie et du Centre-du-Québec, three other businesses took home top honours. The three businesses are Cascades in Kingsey Falls, Portes Baril, and Sani Marc in Victoriaville.

I am very proud of all of the business owners in my riding who are dedicated, involved in their communities, and who truly care about developing their region. These job creators actively participate in our region's economy, showcasing the talents of Quebecers here and around the world.

Congratulations to this fine group of businesses.

* * *

[*English*]

IRAN-IRAQ EARTHQUAKE

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the global community was saddened to hear of the deadly earthquake in the Iran-Iraq border region. With over 500 dead, thousands injured, and thousands more rendered homeless, the 7.3 magnitude earthquake represents one of the deadliest natural disasters in the past year.

As is always the case when faced with unspeakable tragedy, Canadians, including countless individuals in my riding of Willowdale, have responded with compassion and generosity.

For Canadians still looking to contribute toward humanitarian assistance and relief efforts, please contact the Canadian Red Cross, Paradise Charity Group, IDRF Canada, and Action Against Hunger for more details on how to help.

Oral Questions

I would ask everyone to give generously in this time of need.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DAY

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am wearing a blue ribbon created by Espace Suroît in honour of International Children's Rights Day. Children's rights are enshrined in a UN convention ratified by Canada. This convention calls for every child's right to education, health, and equal opportunity, among other things, to be respected.

A national summit opens tomorrow here in Ottawa, and I am proud to support the initiative to create a children's bill of rights in Canada. Information sessions for children are being held by several schools in my riding, including École Edgar-Hebert, École Notre-Dame du Saint-Esprit, and École centrale de Saint-Antoine-Abbé.

Why is our country not fully complying with the convention? Indigenous children do not all have access to clean drinking water, a safe home, or education. Children are not all being heard, despite their constant pleas to participate in our democracy. Too many children are going to school hungry. How is it that in 2017, a country as rich as ours is still so far behind?

Let us work together to implement policies that will ensure children's rights are respected.

* * *

[English]

TOBIAS ENVERGA

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Conservative family to recognize the sudden and terribly sad passing of our friend and colleague, Senator Tobias Enverga.

[Translation]

Tobias was highly esteemed in political circles here in Ottawa and was a friend to countless people across Canada, especially in the proud Filipino-Canadian community. Tributes are pouring in for a man who had the ability to make everyone feel welcome and appreciated.

[English]

He brought to the Senate the same work ethic and unstoppable optimism that can be found in the Filipino-Canadian community across the country, a community for which he had an abiding affection.

The senator was a trailblazer. He was the first Filipino Canadian senator. He was the first Filipino Canadian to win election to any office in the City of Toronto. He did a vast body of charitable work in support of the relationship between Canada and the Philippines.

Senator Enverga will be deeply missed.

Our thoughts and prayers and those of every member of the House are with his wife Rosemer and their three children.

May he rest in peace, and may his memory long be a blessing to those who knew and loved him.

* * *

CHILDREN

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, I participated in UNICEF's "Bring Your MP to School Day". The students at Monsignor Haller, St. Aloysius, Cardinal Leger, Hespeler, and Groh public schools asked some great questions.

Today is the anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Many nations, including Canada, dedicate today to the welfare of all children. The Minister of Public Safety's recent direction recognized that the primary consideration in all state actions concerning children is the best interests of the child, and that detention of a minor is a measure of last resort.

Canada should work to persuade nations whom we have strong ties with to end practices such as blindfolding, denial of access to parental and legal advice, administrative detention, and segregation of minors. Those are no ways to treat a child.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Acting Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Hébert, member for the electoral district of Lac-Saint-Jean.

* * *

● (1420)

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Mr. Richard Hébert, member for the electoral district of Lac-Saint-Jean, introduced by the right hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade.

The Speaker: I invite the hon. member to take his seat.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ISIS terrorists are criminals who fought against our country, but they are now being welcomed back to Canada by the Prime Minister with the promise of reintegration services to help them.

Canadians are shocked and alarmed that their government is not taking any steps to protect them. This is the number one job of any government.

Will the Prime Minister stand today and tell us exactly how many ISIS fighters have returned to Canada, and how many of those are currently in jail or under government surveillance?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the top priorities of any government is to ensure the safety and security of Canadians, and we ensure that every day.

Our national security agencies are combatting the phenomenon of Canadians participating in terrorist activities overseas. We use a number of tools to address the threat posed by these individuals, including the passenger protect program; cancelling, revoking, or refusing passports; and laying criminal charges.

Our national security agencies are carefully monitoring these individuals, and our law enforcement agencies do the difficult work of collecting evidence required for convictions in Canadian courts.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are people who got on a plane to fight for ISIS and watched as our allied soldiers were burned to death in a cage. These are people who got on a plane to go to fight for an organization that sells women and girls into slavery. These are people who left Canada to fight for a group of people who push homosexuals off buildings just for being gay.

Can the Prime Minister explain to the House exactly what a program or reintegration service would look like for the people who commit these kinds of atrocities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the protection of Canadians, and will continue to.

We also continue to carefully monitor trends in extremist travel, and our national security agencies work together to ensure that our response reflects the current threat environment.

We recognize that the return of even one individual may have serious national security implications. We have launched the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence, which helps to ensure that resources are in place to facilitate disengagement from violent ideologies. In particular, children who return from conflict zones require tailored—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[Translation]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have been fighting to get the Liberal government to recognize that ISIS has committed genocide against the Yazidi community and help bring members of that community to Canada. Instead, the Prime Minister is talking about reintegration services for the ISIS fighters who victimized those individuals.

Why does this Prime Minister find it so difficult to support victims? Can he tell us exactly how many ISIS terrorists have come back to Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work that all members of the House of Commons have done to help us welcome hundreds of Yazidi women and children. It is important to demonstrate that we are a welcoming country for victims of terrorism.

Oral Questions

At the same time, we protect and defend all Canadians by monitoring anyone who is returning after being involved in conflict overseas. We will be there to ensure that they are monitored and overseen. We will also be there to help them disengage from this terrorist ideology.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister on this historic achievement: for the very first time, a prime minister and his finance minister are being investigated for ethics breaches after the Minister of Finance has already been found guilty and fined for breaking the rules.

How can Canadians trust this Prime Minister who promised to raise the bar?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have always said, on this side of the House we take very seriously our responsibilities with respect to ethics, transparency, and accountability. That is why we have confidence in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

The opposition members are attacking the integrity and the work of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We will always work with her to ensure that Canadians can have confidence in the work she does and in the work we do in the House to be worthy of Canadians' trust.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very concerned about the revelations contained in the paradise papers. The Canada Revenue Agency indicated that it would treat all allegations seriously and investigate every potential breach of Canadian law.

However, the Prime Minister chatted with his friend, Stephen Bronfman, and received assurances and said “we are satisfied”.

Who is the Prime Minister speaking for? Was he speaking for the Canada Revenue Agency? Was he speaking for the Government of Canada? Or, has he just started taking to using royal pronouns?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government takes very seriously the responsibility of going after tax avoidance and tax evasion. That is why we have invested close to a billion dollars over the past two years to ensure that people are paying their fair share of taxes. That has resulted in significant actions, and we are in the process of recovering \$25 billion of monies avoided and evaded. This is what Canadians expect, and that is what we are going to continue to do .

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for weeks now, the Minister of Finance has been telling us over and over that he did not break the law and that he followed all the rules.

Even when the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner fined him for breaking the law, he kept saying he had done nothing wrong. Now the commissioner has confirmed that she is going to open an investigation into the minister's involvement in Bill C-27.

How can the Prime Minister keep defending his minister when he is still officially under investigation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is there to ascertain the facts, without being swayed by any partisan influence or opposition attacks on a government.

We on this side of the aisle have faith in the work of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. It is a shame to see the members of the parties opposite attacking the integrity of an institution of Parliament.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when people look at the minister's involvement in Bill C-27, everyone sees the same thing.

All of the opposition parties had pointed out problems, and today it emerged that an organization representing retired Canada Post workers had already raised the same concerns with the commissioner. I teach my kids to take responsibility for their actions, and I am sure the Prime Minister does the same with his.

Will he demand less from the Minister of Finance than he does from his own children?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we expect all members of the House to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that we are worthy of Canadians' trust.

That is what we on this side of the House, including the Minister of Finance, have always done. We will continue to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that all the rules are followed. We on this side of the House have faith in the integrity of the commissioner's work.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Prime Minister will walk across broken glass to defend his ethically embattled finance minister, but will not

lift a finger to help out Canadian pensioners. Bill C-27 is not only a clear attack on workers' pensions, it is also a massive conflict of interest. The opposition hears it and raises concerns, and the Liberals refuse to. Canadians see it, and the Liberals ignore it. The Ethics Commissioner is speaking about it, but the Liberals will not even mention it. She has launched an official investigation into this minister and this bill. Therefore, will the Prime Minister maybe update his hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil ethics code?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have sat in this House for many years, at the same time as the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, listening to the previous Conservative government attack the institutions of Parliament, the commissioners of Parliament, and the frameworks that supported our democracy. It was disappointing to hear him this weekend go after the Ethics Commissioner and impugn her integrity and her capacity to do her job. I think we all would expect better from the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): But he would never take personal cheap shots at anybody in this place.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal ethics saga continues, with even more information coming out about the finance minister's clear conflict of interest with Bill C-27. Let us go through the facts.

As CEO of Morneau Shepell, he took over Mercer Canada, which manages the pensions of 93,000 Canada Post workers and retirees. Guess who stands to benefit if Bill C-27 becomes law. Well, Morneau Shepell, owned by our finance minister. I guess he stood to make boatloads of money. He knew exactly what he was doing when he took this benefit.

Now that the Prime Minister knows the same thing, will he stop defending—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again it is disappointing to see that the opposition has nothing but cheap shots and slinging mud when this government is focused on working with the Ethics Commissioner but is mostly focused on delivering the kind of growth for the middle class that Canadians voted for two years ago. We are demonstrating the highest growth rate in the G7. We are demonstrating hundreds of thousands of jobs. We are demonstrating a low unemployment rate. We are delivering on the kind of real change that Canadians voted for two years ago.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2014, when the Minister of Finance was the executive chair of Morneau Shepell, he participated in a forum on pension plan reform that advocated for the measures he included in his Bill C-27.

Interestingly, in the days following the introduction of his bill, Morneau Shepell share values surged by nearly \$1 million. It is therefore not surprising that the minister is now the subject of an investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. I have one simple question.

Oral Questions

When the minister introduced his bill, did the Prime Minister know that he was in direct conflict of interest?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will keep working to ensure a dignified retirement for Canadians across the country. That is very important. I will also keep working with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that her review is complete. I feel that I must now continue working to help Canadians enjoy a dignified retirement. That is the important goal here.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase my question, so perhaps I can actually get an answer.

For nearly two years, the Minister of Finance owned shares valued at nearly \$21 million that he never put in a blind trust. He promoted a pension plan reform that served his own interests and the interests of his Liberal friends. Now the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner.

How can Canadians continue to trust the government across the aisle?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that I am not in a conflict of interest, as I am doing now. I sold all my Morneau Shepell shares to ensure that I would no longer be in a conflict of interest, and I am certainly not at this time.

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the mess that these Liberals get themselves into just never seems to end. It is now confirmed that the finance minister is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner for the fact that he benefited from legislation that he personally introduced. Incredibly, we have three cabinet ministers from the Liberal government currently under investigation, including the Prime Minister, who is still being investigated for his billionaire holiday, and the finance minister being investigated for the second time.

With all these investigations, investigations, investigations, how can these Liberals be trusted?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will continue to work to assure that Canadians can retire in dignity. I will continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that her examination is complete. Now that I have sold all my Morneau Shepell shares and made a large donation to charity, I am looking forward to continuing these efforts on behalf of Canadians.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this ethical scandal that the finance minister finds himself in may only be the tip of the iceberg. The only reason everybody knows that the Minister of Finance benefited from Bill C-27 is because the media forced him to disclose that he held shares in Morneau Shepell. However, the minister is still hiding what other shares he held in other companies over the last two years and what other government decisions he made that benefited him.

Let us just rip the band-aid off, let us get this out in the open: what shares did the Minister of Finance own in what companies over the last two years?

• (1435)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, I made 100% disclosure of all my assets to the

Ethics Commissioner. That allows me to work on behalf of Canadians, and the work is going well. Over the last couple of years, we have seen an enormous change in growth rates in this country, and we have seen more than 500,000 new jobs for Canadians. Canadians have a higher level of confidence because they have more money for their families. We will continue to work for Canadians because that is what we were elected to do.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that now that he has sold all of his shares in Morneau Shepell he can now work on behalf of Canadians. What does that say about the last two years while he held those shares? During that time, he introduced a bill creating the very targeted benefit pension plans that his company designs and profits from. His whole defence has been that he has always asked the Ethics Commissioner for her permission.

Did he have her permission to introduce this bill?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I will continue to work on behalf of Canadians. That is the important work that we are doing. By working with the Ethics Commissioner, as I have done from day one, that allows us to ensure we do not have conflicts of interest. We know that what we can do now is continue on the work as I have talked about, the work that has, for example, lowered the rate of unemployment to the lowest it has been since the great recession so that Canadians and Canadian families can actually do well and see the fruits of the advantages for them and their families.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, targeted benefit pensions are highly specialized as a financial product. Not only is Morneau Shepell one of the only companies that provides it, it designed the very unique model in New Brunswick that inspired the bill that the minister introduced in the House of Commons. That means it is uniquely positioned to profit from it. The minister keeps hiding behind the Ethics Commissioner. Yes or no, did the minister have permission from the Ethics Commissioner to introduce a bill that would profit his company?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really do care deeply about retirement dignity in this country. I want to make sure that Canadians have the ability to retire with the opportunity to continue their life in dignity after they retire. That means assuring that they have good pension plans and that they have more options than just defined contribution pension plans. We will continue to work on behalf of Canadians because we know that is what they want us to do.

Oral Questions

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' Bill C-27 would open the door for crown corporations and federally regulated employers to convert secure defined benefit pension plans into less secure plans. In fact, before the finance minister was in cabinet, he spent his career advocating for shifting pension risk from employer to employee, and then presented the Liberals' plan to do exactly that with Bill C-27. How can the Liberals continue to say they are standing up for the middle class? It is simple: will the Liberals do what is right for working Canadians and withdraw their shameful bill?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party government will continue to defend Canadians in defined benefit plans. We think that is critically important. We also know that the 85% of private sector workers who do not have defined benefit plans need options too. We will continue to provide options that would enable people to have retirement in dignity, and that would include multiple options, including defined benefit plans and other arrangements that make sense for their situation.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, transferring the employer's risk to the employee is not what I would call working for the middle class. It is working for the rich friends of the governing party.

We have known from the start that Bill C-27 was bad for workers. Unions and workers across Canada agree that this bill should be scrapped.

In addition to introducing a bad bill, the Minister of Finance also put himself in a clear conflict of interest to the point where he is under investigation by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

The Liberals never should have introduced this bill. Will they now right that wrong by withdrawing it?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will keep working to ensure a dignified retirement for Canadians. That is very important. We know that the 85% of private sector workers who do not have a defined benefit plan need options too. We will continue to work for them and for all members of the middle class.

* * *

• (1440)

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claimed he had a better way of doing accountability and transparency and ministerial independence, but the PM did not miss a beat pre-empting a transparent investigation by the revenue minister regarding questions raised by the paradise papers about offshore tax avoidance, tax evasion, and links to chief Liberal bagman Stephen Bronfman. The PM said he is satisfied with his bagman's explanation, so can the Prime Minister or the minister confirm that Mr. Bronfman is not under investigation?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to combatting tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance. In

our first two budgets, we invested historic sums to make sure that we had the right tools to crack down on tax evaders. Our plan is already producing results. We have had 627 cases transferred to criminal investigation, 268 search warrants executed, and 78 convictions. In regard to the Panama papers, the CRA is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take any appropriate action. We will continue to work to ensure that we have a tax system that works for every Canadian.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party's chief bagman was referenced in the paradise papers, and there is some question as to the legality and ethics of failing to shoulder his part of the tax burden alongside the middle class. The Prime Minister's Office conducted the usual checks and seems satisfied with the explanations given by his advisers.

Does the Prime Minister plan to use his influence to ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency puts to rest the matter involving his friend, the Liberal Party's chief bagman?

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of the fight against international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. This was highlighted in our election platform and in the minister's mandate letter.

We are working toward a tax system that is fair for all Canadians. The agency is working extremely closely with international partners to obtain the list of Canadian taxpayers who may be involved. The CRA is reviewing links to the Canadian entities and will take any appropriate action.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the disability tax credit and the pension plans for persons with disabilities are a critical help to those struggling with type 1 diabetes. I have received letters from thousands across our country, like 18-year-old Michael, who talked about the \$100-per-day expenses he has to pay out of pocket to manage this disease.

Why does the minister not do her job and go after Liberals hiding money offshore rather than targeting type 1 diabetics?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear. The eligibility criteria for the disability tax credit have not changed. Our government recognizes the impact that diabetes has on the health of Canadians, and that is why we are making investments in research, prevention, and early detection of diabetes so that fewer Canadians develop the condition and better treatments are available when it occurs. In budget 2015-16, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research invested over \$41 million in diabetes research.

We will continue to support Canadians with diabetes, because that is what Canadians expect.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why are more than 1,000 people with diabetes losing their income, their disability tax credit, and their registered disability savings plan, when the Prime Minister is bending over backwards for major fundraisers and those with deep pockets in tax havens?

The Prime Minister told me that he would look after my constituent in Sainte Justine, people with diabetes, and people with autism.

When is he going to put them ahead of Liberals with deep pockets?

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to assure this House that our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the credits and benefits they are entitled to. We are moving forward with a national disability act that would remove barriers and improve access for all Canadians who live with disabilities. We have made the disability tax credit more accessible than ever before. We have simplified the forms required to apply for the credit. We have added nurse practitioners to complete the applications of their patients, and we have just started.

We will continue to focus on supporting the most vulnerable in our country.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of the Phoenix fiasco has not denied that the cost of repairs could surpass \$1 billion. The number of affected public servants continues to grow, and there is no clear timeline to fix it. In fact, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada has said that Phoenix is not fixable.

For two years, the Liberals have not listened to warnings from public servants and their unions. It is time for plan B. Will the minister commit today to working with our public servants so they can be paid properly?

•(1445)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harper Conservatives botched this program from the beginning. While the previous government spent \$309 million on the systems, booked savings of \$70 million a year, and let go of hundreds of employees in order to falsely balance its budget—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Order. Most members of all parties can sit through question period and hear things they disagree with and dislike without having to react. All members should be able to do this, because, after all, we are all adults here.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Oral Questions

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, our government has been on this since day one. We are focusing on our partnerships.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we are focusing on improving our government. We have invested \$192 million to clean up that mess, and hired 380 employees to ensure that public servants are paid the money they are owed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton West and others did not hear me. I asked them not to react when someone else has the floor. I know they have great voices and lots to say, but I would prefer to hear them, indeed we all want to hear them, when it is their turn.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we did not create this mess, but we are going to fix it.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Phoenix was supposed to save us \$70 million a year, but now it might end up costing us \$1 billion. This government has no deadline and the number of public servants affected keeps going up. What a disaster.

In light of this fiasco, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada is calling on the government to work with public servants and unions on coming up with an alternative to Phoenix.

Will this government listen to them or simply ignore their demands?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Stephen Harper's Conservatives botched this program from day one. They rushed the software rollout and prematurely laid off hundreds of workers who ensured that public service employees were paid on time.

We inherited the Conservatives' defective system, but we are determined to find a permanent solution. Stabilizing this system is not easy. The reality is that it will take time and cost money.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for too long communities across Canada have been experiencing the devastating effects of gun violence and gang activity. Criminal gangs are responsible for rising numbers of killings, often involving guns illegally smuggled into the country. It is a tragedy when young Canadians get involved in gang activity and, of course, when innocent bystanders are caught in the crossfire.

Can the Minister of Public Safety tell us what the government is doing to address this scourge and to keep our communities safe?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for all of his hard work.

On Friday, I was in Surrey to announce \$327.6 million in federal funding over five years and \$100 million annually thereafter to help communities and law enforcement reduce gun and gang violence. We will also be holding a national summit next spring for stakeholders across the country to tackle this problem and identify the best solutions. By working together, we will all do a better job of combatting gang violence and building safer communities.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier the Prime Minister said that “even one” ISIS fighter represents a security threat to Canada, and then hid the number of ISIS fighters who have returned here. When asked about how he planned to manage this threat, he then said the government is there to help them let go of their terrorist ideology. What he should have said is that there will be consequences when choosing to fight for a terrorist death cult.

Where is the Prime Minister's commitment to seek justice for the victims of ISIS, and how many ISIS fighters have returned to Canada?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CSIS, the RCMP, and CBSA pay very close attention to anyone who poses a threat to the security of Canada. We work closely with our allies in the Five Eyes and the G7. Surveillance and investigations are tight and thorough. When evidence is actually available, charges are laid, and a range of other legal measures are also available under the Criminal Code and the CSIS Act. As the director of CSIS indicated before a parliamentary committee some months ago, the number of returnees known to the Government of Canada is in the order of 60, and they are under very careful investigation.

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 60 ISIS fighters have returned to Canada, after having fought Canadian soldiers and our allies. That is downright insulting, thank you very much.

Now, the minister's office is telling us that appropriate support is needed to disengage and reintegrate foreign terrorist travellers and their families. Unbelievable.

Does the minister realize that it is his job to keep Canadians safe and not to make these murderers feel better?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman should know very well that the security agencies and police forces of this country do an extraordinary job in defending the safety and security of Canadians, and also in fulfilling all of Canada's obligations with respect to the international coalition against Daesh. When evidence is discovered that indicates that offences against Canada have been committed, that evidence is put together in cases filed in court. When prosecutions are possible, they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister should make sure they are all arrested and prosecuted now.

The Prime Minister has admitted that his policy to cut the pay of injured soldiers is having negative consequences, but he refuses to do anything about it. While the Prime Minister defends his billionaire friends, he has already targeted Canadians suffering from diabetes, cut the danger pay of our troops fighting ISIS, and now has removed the allowances for ill and injured soldiers, all of this to pay for the Prime Minister's out of control spending.

Will the Prime Minister show some appreciation and respect for the sacrifices being made by our troops and reverse this cold-hearted Liberal policy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that our military members receive fair pay and compensation for their service to Canada. Our defence policy has put an emphasis on making sure that our members are well supported. This is why our government recently approved a 6.34% pay raise for most members. These allowances have also been increased by 5.1%.

We will make sure that we look after our number one asset, which is our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the minister is telling us that we need to work on reintegrating murderers who fought with ISIS and tried to kill our own soldiers. On the other hand, the Liberals are cancelling the monthly allowance for injured soldiers who courageously fought to keep our country safe.

Can the minister tell us why he does not respect our Canadian military heroes?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we conducted our defence policy review, Canadians told us to make sure that we looked after our Canadian Armed Forces, to make sure that they are well funded. With our new defence policy, we have probably the most well-funded defence policy since World War II. We are making sure that our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces have the funding needed. We are making sure that we have the right personnel to look after them. There will be a more than 70% increase by 2026.

We are making sure that our women and men are looked after for the near future.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite years of advocacy by coastal communities, the Liberals' Bill C-64 does not legislate on the most pressing aspects of the abandoned vessel problem. Last week another boat sank in Ladysmith.

For too long federal failures have left coastal communities with nowhere to turn. That is why my bill includes their solutions and fills gaps in the government's new bill. However, in unprecedented interference, Liberal members are blocking debate on my abandoned vessel legislation.

Why is the Trudeau government stifling coastal voices?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be totally inappropriate for me to comment on decisions taken by the procedure and House affairs committee.

Having said that, we are extremely proud of Bill C-64, which is a comprehensive strategy to deal with abandoned and derelict vessels. It is something that all of government should support.

The Speaker: I just want to remind all members not to use the name of a member of the House, even when they are talking in relation to the Government of Canada.

* * *

• (1455)

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government announced its contribution to UN peacekeeping operations—a condescending offer, according to our former commander in Bosnia.

The government promised one-third of the troops, in yet-to-be-determined locations, and no police officers. We do not know if this is a real promise or if it is yet another promise that the government intends to break.

How does this government expect to win a seat on the Security Council when it does not fulfill its commitments?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, making sure Canada is once again involved in peacekeeping operations is important to our government. Our troops are highly qualified and well trained. We are working to ensure that their contributions are put to the best possible use. That means using their expertise where we need it most. Canadians expect us to make a thoughtful and significant contribution to peacekeeping operations, and that is what we are going to do.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister decided to surprise world leaders and was a no-show at the TPP meeting. The trade minister was left alone with 10 presidents and prime ministers, trying to explain where the Prime Minister was. As a result of this snub, Canada is now being blocked

from joining the East Asia Summit. An Australian official said that the leaders were gobsmacked by the Prime Minister's behaviour.

Is this what the Liberals meant when they said, "Canada is back"? What happened?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a strong supporter of progressive free trade. The Asia-Pacific is an important region and a priority market for our government.

During the last APEC meeting, tangible progress was made toward a possible agreement, including locking in enforceable provisions with respect to labour and the environment, and the suspension of an IP package that was not in Canada's interest.

However, there is still some work to be done. Our priority is to ensure that it is the right deal for Canadian workers and businesses. Our government looks forward to continuing negotiations on outstanding amendments, but will not rush into an agreement that is not in the interest of Canadians.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister torpedoed deciding on a trans-Pacific partnership. Now with the delay, Canadian ranchers are paying 50% duty on frozen beef exports to Japan, something they would not have to face if the trans-Pacific partnership was in place. Farmers are tired of being ignored by the Liberal government unless, of course, they are looking to raise tax revenue. In fact, farmers do not trust the Liberals to represent them on the world stage.

When will the Prime Minister gain critical access in the Asia-Pacific market for Canadian agriculture? When will he sign the TPP?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure members that Canadians trust this government when it comes to international trade. Our government is committed to free and fair trade that is progressive, will grow the economy, and will help the middle class. Over the course of the APEC meeting our government made real progress toward a possible agreement. Environment and labour rights will form crucial pillars of the new agreement and will be subject to dispute settlement mechanisms.

However, there are still a number of issues that remain outstanding for Canada.

We are committed to fostering open markets and creating good, middle-class jobs. That is what Canadians expect from this government and that is what we will deliver.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Like the meeting the Prime Minister did not attend. Canadians expect him to show up.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Durham knows the rule in Standing Order 18 against interrupting. I am sure he will not be doing that anymore.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

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[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are wondering whether the Liberals' promise to defend supply management is another promise they intend to break.

Balancing the budget has proven to be challenging for the Liberals so it has been put in the “pending” file. Will defending supply management end up there too? Our dairy, egg, and poultry producers depend on supply management to make a living.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has not been at the negotiating table for any international trade deals. That shows how little the government cares about agriculture.

When will the Prime Minister make room at the negotiating table for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and stand up for supply management once and for all?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain engaged with the other members of the TPP following the meetings in Vietnam. Our government will not sign on to just any agreement. We want an agreement that is good for Canada. There is still more work to do before we reach a deal.

Ours is the party that fought to bring in supply management, and we will continue to protect and defend it. We have always said that the existing system is excellent. It sets an international standard for stability. Our government remains committed to growing our exports to \$75 billion by 2025 to put more money in our farmers' pockets.

* * *

● (1500)

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former teacher, I have had the extraordinary opportunity to work with young people in my riding, Saint-Laurent, and build good relationships with their families.

Today being Universal Children's Day, would the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell us about our government's new initiatives to help children and families?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to commend my colleague, the member for Saint-Laurent, for the outstanding work she does for her constituents and our children.

Our government believes that all children deserve to live with dignity and to reach their full potential. We have introduced the Canada child benefit, which reduced child poverty in Canada by 40%. We are implementing a historic agreement with the provinces and territories to increase the accessibility, affordability, and quality of day care services across the country. Children are society's most valuable resource. We are eager to keep working very hard to give every individual a fair and real chance to succeed.

ETHICS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, FM93 and QMI Agency reported last week that the former chief of staff to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development now works for CN, which is a clear conflict of interest. Why? Because we know the Canadian government and CN are currently in a dispute.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development says he is not dealing with the Quebec Bridge because he is the minister of families. Wait a second, though—the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has commented on this file 19 times. More to the point, his own news release says that he hosted a work meeting about the Quebec Bridge with stakeholders on August 31, 2016.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell us whether—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be part of a government that understands just how important our citizens' trust is.

Political offices are well aware of and understand the ethics rules. As far as the Ethics Commissioner knows, her recommendations and directives were very carefully followed. End of story.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a month and a half ago, all of Quebec's cultural sectors denounced the void in the government's cultural policy.

Now, the newspaper industry is speaking out. A large coalition of industry representatives published an open letter this morning. They want to know when Ottawa will be offering solutions for print media, which has been in crisis mode for 10 years now. Nearly half of the jobs in this industry have disappeared.

The letter refers to specific solutions, while the minister seems to have only proposed tax breaks for web giants like Google and Facebook.

Does the minister plan on proposing concrete measures to address this crisis, which is a threat to local journalism, our information, and our democracy?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quality journalism is the foundation of our democracy.

Throughout our consultations, Canadians told us two things. First, in terms of journalism, having access to local information is very important. Second, Canadians are increasingly turning to digital platforms to access this content.

Oral Questions

We will see how we can support innovation and the transition to digital formats, but I would also like to remind my colleague that, in terms of concrete action, we have reinvested \$675 million in CBC/Radio-Canada to support journalistic information across the country.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand we live in a complex and ever-changing global security environment. They expect the government to work diligently to make the world a safer, more peaceful, and more prosperous place for them and their families.

This past weekend, the Minister of National Defence wrapped up the ninth annual Halifax International Security Forum, which gathered approximately 350 defence leaders from around the world.

Could the Minister of National Defence please inform the House on the outcome of this year's forum?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year's Halifax International Security Forum was a great success in facilitating important discussions and innovative thinking on global security challenges. I had the chance to discuss important issues with our partners and allies, including increasing women's role in peacekeeping. We also discussed international security issues, such as North Korea and its nuclear weapons program, as well as Russia and global terrorism.

I am proud of the work we accomplished, and would like to thank all our allies and partners for their participation.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is in the process of passing an airline passenger bill of rights, which says it is a right for a child to be seated next to their parent on an airline. However, because the Liberals refuse to fix the no-fly list, some of those kids will not even be allowed on the plane, let alone beside their parent. Not only is that incredibly unfair to thousands of Canadian families, it is a sign that our security measures are flawed. When will the minister commit to a redress system so these children can get off our no-fly list?

• (1505)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that process is under way. The hon. gentleman will know that debate has begun in the House on Bill C-59. Bill C-59 gives us the legal authority to do exactly what he has suggested in his question. We will need to adjust regulations. We will also need to rebuild the computer system in order to accommodate a fully interactive government-controlled system, instead of the flawed system his government introduced a number of years ago.

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as of November 27, blades up to six centimetres, except for razor blades and box cutters, will be allowed on planes.

Oddly enough, this means that ceremonial knives, such as kirpans, will now be permitted. This exception is designed to pander to religious groups, which were quick to applaud the decision.

Is the Minister of Transport telling us that he believes religious dictates are more important than passenger safety?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, passenger safety and the security of our air transportation system is a priority. From time to time, we review the list of objects and products that are allowed or prohibited. We made the decision to accept blades up to six centimetres, or 2.5 inches, on aircraft to harmonize with international standards. It is that simple.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the list of items prohibited on airplanes includes hair gel, water bottles, baby powder, and bath salts, but carrying a ceremonial knife is permitted. It is not permitted in the United States, but it is no problem in Canada.

Will the minister do his homework, review the list of prohibited items and realize that a knife is more dangerous than baby powder?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish that my hon. colleague read the document I published last week. I talked about blades that are 6 centimetres or less. In the case of baby powder or bath salts, he should know the limit is now 350 millilitres, or roughly a can of Coke. If he needs more than a can of baby powder during his trip, he can come see me.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the question of climate change. We have just come through the COP23 discussions in Bonn. Canada did very well. There was leadership, but we still ended up with quite mediocre results and a lot of hopes are being pinned on the upcoming climate leaders summit in Paris being hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron.

I understand the Prime Minister has been taken by official business out of the country a lot lately, but I wonder what his views are, especially with the upcoming opportunity in chairing the G7. Will the Prime Minister consider going to the climate leaders summit?

Routine Proceedings

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that climate change is a global problem that requires global solutions. I am proud of our international leadership over the past two years to address climate change including the ratification of the Paris agreement, the amendment to the Montreal protocol to phase down highly polluted HFCs, and the historic agreement to address greenhouse gas emissions from the aviation sector.

I am also proud to say that the Canadian delegation will be ably led by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to the One Planet Summit. I know that by working together, we will achieve our international commitments as laid out in the Paris agreement.

* * *

●(1510)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2017 Governor General's History Awards. It is a long list, so bear with me please and stand as I call the names, please:

Leia Laing, Naomi Fortier-Fréçon, Mackenzie Anderson, Alexander Angnaluak, K. Dawn Martin, Denise Lipscombe, Daniel Francis, Glen Thielmann, Elly Hooker, David Swanson, Marie-Ève Gingras, Michel Harnois, Chief Dominic Frederick, Tracy Calogheros, Isaac Landry, Maureen Matthews, Lynda Brown, Armand Doucet, Rob Flosman, Janet Ruest, and Marc Mailhot.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question I asked earlier about the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development's conflict of interest, the minister said that he carefully followed the recommendations of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I know him to be an honourable man. In order to clear the air, I am seeking the consent of the House to have the minister table those recommendations and the letter from his former chief of staff to shed light on the matter.

The Speaker: I get the impression that is a matter of debate and not a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

VETERANS OMBUDSMAN

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Veterans Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2016-17.

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 24 petitions.

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●(1515)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in relation to Bill C-58, an act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 45th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year 2017-18.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 46th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 92 (3)(a), the committee reports that it has concurred in the report of the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business arising that Bill C-352, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to provide for the development of a national strategy on the abandonment of vessels, should be designated non-votable.

[English]

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-51, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Department of Justice Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

[Translation]

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

[English]

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (B) 2017-18."

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2017-18”.

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of oral questions on Tuesday, November 28, 2017, a member of each recognized party, a member of the Bloc Québécois and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands each be permitted to make a statement and that the time taken for these statements shall be added to the time provided for government orders.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

ALGOMA PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to table petitions from people in Wawa, Richards Landing, Pancake Bay, Alona Bay, Batchawana Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Nipigon, and Goulais River.

The petitioners remain extremely concerned that the Algoma passenger train is still not back in operation. They point out the growing negative economic impact, which includes loss of employment due to lack of accessibility to transportation options. They remind the government that the roads available are industrial, that these pose serious safety concerns, and that not all owners and tourists have roads that lead to their properties.

The petitioners ask that the Minister of Transport assist in putting the passenger train back in service.

PARENTAL BENEFITS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition today.

In 2016, Airdrie residents Sarah and Lee Cormier told me the story of how they endured the heartbreaking tragedy of losing their four-month-old daughter Quinn to SIDS. The Cormiers' parental

benefits were immediately cut and they were told that they had to pay back some of the benefits, only adding to the grief and stress.

On behalf of the Cormiers and other families in my constituency, such as Greg and Jaime Sawchuk who lost their son Vaughn, and thousands of other Canadian families that have lost an infant child, I table the petition calling upon Parliament to look for ways to better support parents dealing with pregnancy and infant loss.

● (1520)

ABANDONED VESSELS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House once again to present petitions from voters in Nanaimo and on Gabriola Island, calling on the government to accede to their recommendations, bundled into my Bill C-352, to finally bring solutions to abandoned vessels.

The petitioners call on Parliament to get taxpayers off the hook for the cleanup of oil spills from abandoned vessels by fixing vessel registration, by creating good green jobs, by investing in recycling, and a turn-in boat program, and making, first and foremost, the Canadian Coast Guard the lead agency to be the receiver of wrecks so communities no longer get the run-around when they call for help.

How sad that the Liberal majority on PROC has called for the bill to be deemed non-votable and not debated in the House. We will appeal.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table e-petition 706, initiated by Brad Hazledine from Freelon, Ontario.

The petitioners ask that the government adopt my private member's bill, Bill C-251, as a government bill so we can finally ban the importation of shark fin to Canada.

Sharks are a vital part of healthy ocean ecosystems around the world. Unfortunately, 70 million to 100 million sharks are being killed each year for their fins, and one-third of all shark species are now at risk of extinction as a result.

This call for action comes on the heels of the tragic death of Rob Stewart. Rob was an award-winning Canadian filmmaker who ultimately and tragically ended up giving his life for this cause. Canada could honour his work and provide a lasting legacy for his efforts by adopting Bill C-251.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions from constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The first petition relates to the ongoing issue, which the petitioners want the House to recognize, and I think most members of the House do, that we have not solved the problem of violence against women, which particularly disproportionately impacts indigenous women, and is reflected in the ongoing and unsolved issue of murdered and missing indigenous women across the country.

Routine Proceedings

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, particularly of the area around the body of water known as Saanich Inlet.

Petitioners throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands and Victoria call for action by Transport Canada to designate Saanich Inlet as a zero discharge zone, that there be zero sewage discharge in Saanich Inlet. This primarily relates to recreational vessels and live-aboard vessels.

[Translation]

PENSIONS

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table in the House a petition from workers who want to end corporate pension theft. Many of those who signed the petition are Sears Canada employees from Chicoutimi.

Workers count on their pensions and benefits to live and retire with dignity. They are calling on the government to change the bankruptcy laws that currently allow companies to take money meant for their workers' pensions and benefits.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of my constituents, who collected over 5,000 signatures.

The petitioners ask the Canadian government to use its diplomatic clout with the Government of Ghana to promote respect for human rights of all LGBTQ sexual minorities in Ghana, specifically asking the Government of Ghana to decriminalize same-sex activity and, in particular, repeal section 104 of the Ghana criminal code, which makes same-sex sexual activity among males a serious crime, punishable by imprisonment.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of constituents along the Thames River. They are very concerned about the fact the Conservative government stripped the environmental legislation that covered in the navigable waters act and made many rivers vulnerable, including the Thames River, which is a significant heritage river and is the place where many species at risk thrive.

The petitioners ask that the Liberal government keep its promise to reinstate environmental protections, gutted when we lost the navigable waters act, and to support my Bill C-355, which commits government to prioritizing the protection of the Thames River by amending the Navigation Protection Act.

* * *

●(1525)

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: Questions Nos. 1201, 1207, 1211 and 1217 to 1219.

[Text]

Question No. 1201—**Mr. Robert Sopuck:**

With regard to boil water advisories on First Nations reserve land: (a) how many boil water advisories were in place as of September 27, 2017; and (b) what are the details of each advisory, including for each the (i) location, (ii) number of people subject to the advisory, (iii) reason for advisory?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, please consult the weblink for all drinking water advisories in first nations communities at www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1506514230742.

Question No. 1207—**Ms. Tracey Ramsey:**

With regard to the United States of America's Department of Commerce and Bureau of Industry and Security's Section 232 Investigation: The Effects of Imports on the National Security (Steel): what has the government done to push for the exemption of Canadian made, produced, manufactured, or processed steel?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is actively engaged on the issue of the U.S. section 232 investigation on steel imports.

Canada filed comments with the U.S. Department of Commerce on May 31, 2017, highlighting that it is a reliable trading partner and that steel imported from Canada does not undermine U.S. national security but strengthens it, given our integrated supply chains and our close bilateral collaboration on national defence and security issues. Canada also stressed the fact that any import restrictions on Canadian steel could have a severe impact on integrated supply chains.

The government has actively advocated for the exclusion of Canadian steel from any measure contemplated by the U.S. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has frequently discussed this issue with the United States Secretary of Commerce, and the Prime Minister of Canada has raised concerns about any restrictions that could be imposed on Canadian steel with the President of the United States. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has also raised the issue with the Secretary of Commerce and the Minister of Defence has discussed the file with the U.S. Secretary of Defense. In addition, Ambassador of Canada to the United States David MacNaughton has raised the issue with the White House, key cabinet secretaries, and relevant members of Congress. The Embassy of Canada in Washington has also raised Canada's concerns with this investigation with U.S. interlocutors at the departments of Commerce and Defense, on the Hill, and with U.S. industry.

Question No. 1211—**Mr. Bob Saroya:**

With regard to government expenditures on bottled water by Environment and Climate Change Canada since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total amount spent; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) file number, if applicable?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2011, Environment and Climate Change Canada has been implementing its policy on drinking water that ensures employees have access to a potable drinking water source at all times. In line with the policy, all supplemental water use (e.g., water bottles, water coolers, and water filtration systems) was eliminated in buildings where water has been tested and meets drinking water guidelines. Environment and Climate Change Canada avoids the use of bottled water as much as possible in order to avoid unnecessary waste.

The departmental financial system does not have specific line object coding to track costs related to bottled water. Therefore, Environment and Climate Change Canada is unable to respond to Q-1211 (a) and (b).

Question No. 1217— **Mr. David Anderson:**

With regard to the consultation period ending on October 2, 2017, in reference to the proposed tax changes: (a) how many submissions were made to the government; (b) what is the breakdown of submissions by (i) individuals, (ii) businesses, (iii) unions, (iv) organizations, (v) other; and (c) for each of the submissions referred to in (b), how many (i) fully supported the proposal, (ii) raised concerns regarding the proposal?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), over 21,000 submissions in response to the consultation on tax planning using private corporations were received by the Department of Finance in the dedicated consultation mailbox. This total includes over 11,000 form letters.

With regard to part (b) and part (c), the department has been reviewing each submission to ensure that the substantive comments that are being made are properly taken into account in the further development of the policy. Through this process, the department has not kept a record or a tally of all these submissions based on their source, such as individuals, businesses, or based on their degree of support. That said, various opinions were expressed.

Question No. 1218— **Mr. David Anderson:**

With regard to the statement made by the Minister of Natural Resources in the House of Commons on October 2, 2017, that “the Energy East project will be considered and assessed under exactly the same criteria as the Enbridge Line 3 expansion and as the Trans Mountain expansion”: (a) what are the exact same criteria under which all three projects were considered and assessed; and (b) were there any variations in regard to the criteria used to consider and assess the three various projects and, if so, what were the variations?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, open, fair, inclusive, and transparent processes for review of energy projects are critical to ensuring public confidence and to having good projects move forward with the support of Canadians.

With regard to (a), in January 2016, the government outlined an interim approach to guide its reviews of, and decisions on, major resource projects. The interim approach is premised on five principles or criteria.

One, no project proponent will be asked to return to the starting line. In other words, the government will review projects under, and make its decisions in accordance with, the laws in place at the time when proponents submitted project proposals.

Two, decisions will be based on science, traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and other relevant evidence.

Three, the views of the public and affected communities will be sought and considered.

Four, indigenous peoples will be meaningfully consulted, and where appropriate, impacts on their rights and interests will be accommodated.

Five, direct and upstream greenhouse gas emissions linked to the projects under review will be assessed.

The interim approach will be in place until the government concludes its reviews of the federal environmental assessment and regulatory legislation. The government has applied the interim approach to its reviews of, and decisions on, the Line 3 replacement project, the Trans Mountain expansion project, the Nova Gas Transmission line 2017, and the Towerbirch expansion project. These projects are moving forward and creating tens of thousands of good middle-class jobs.

With regard to (b), there have been no variations in the government’s application of the interim approach to any project.

On October 5, 2017, the proponents of the energy east and eastern mainline projects, energy east, decided to withdraw the project applications. The proponent made a business decision. The government would have used the exact same review process for the energy east project.

Question No. 1219— **Mr. David Anderson:**

With regard to the proposed tax changes on small businesses announced by the Minister of Finance in July 2017: (a) what is the projected increase in compliance and enforcement costs for the Canada Revenue Agency in order to enforce the proposed changes for (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020; and (b) what is the breakdown of the expenses referred to in (a)?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the consultation period the government received feedback on the complexity of the proposed measures and potential unintended consequences. Over 21,000 written submissions were received by the Department of Finance Canada. The government also received feedback that the measures could create uncertainty in relation to how amounts received from a family business would be taxed. To address these concerns, the government will simplify the proposed measures with the aim of providing greater certainty for family members who contribute to a family business.

Specifically, the government will work to reduce the compliance burden with respect to establishing the contributions of spouses and family members including labour, capital, risk, and past contributions; better target the proposed rules; and address double taxation concerns.

As proposals are not yet finalized, it is not possible to project the compliance and enforcement costs for the Canada Revenue Agency.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1192, 1195, 1196, 1198, 1200, 1202 to 1206, 1209, 1210, 1212 to 1216, 1220 to 1223, 1226 and 1227 as well as Starred Question No. 1225 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1192—Mr. Chris Warkentin:

With regard to government data held on servers physically located outside of Canada as of September 25, 2017, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) which departments, agencies, Crown corporations, or other government entities had data held on servers located outside of Canada; (b) what is the highest security level (secret, top secret, etc.) of documents or data which is located on the servers; (c) where are the servers located; (d) which company owns the servers; (e) which company operates the servers, if different from (d); and (f) how is the Security of Information Act or other relevant laws regarding classified information enforced when classified information is held outside of Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1195—Mr. Bob Zimmer:

With regard to contracts which were paid out, but for which the products or services were not rendered or utilized, since July 1, 2016: what are the details of all such contracts, including for each the (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) original contract amount, (iv) amount paid out, (v) description of product or service, (vi) reason product or service was not rendered or utilized, (vii) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1196—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to staffing of the new temporary facilities being used to house asylum seekers, as of September 26, 2017: (a) how many Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada Border Services Agency, Department of National Defence, or other government staff are being used to staff the various facilities, broken down by facility; (b) what is the total amount budgeted for the staffing of the facilities; (c) what were previous employment positions for the individuals who are currently assigned to work at the temporary facilities; and (d) how many individuals have been hired to backfill the positions left vacated by those assigned to the temporary facilities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1198—Mr. Ben Lobb:

With regard to media monitoring conducted by the government, or on behalf of the government, as of September 27, 2017, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation: what are the names and other search terms being monitored?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1200—Mr. Robert Sopuck:

With regard to the decision to split Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada into two separate departments: (a) what is the itemized cost breakdown of all costs associated with the change; (b) who between the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs is considered the senior Minister for the portfolio; (c) according to the decision-making structure of the organization, which Minister has the ultimate decision-making authority; and (d) if the ultimate decision-making authority is divided amongst the two Ministers, what are the various areas of responsibility of each Minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1202—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to foreign aid funding: (a) what is the complete itemized list of funding recipients from the \$650 million pledged on March 8, 2017, for abortion and reproductive services overseas, broken down by (i) country, (ii) organization or individual, (iii) title of program or project, (iv) amount received; (b) which government department and section is overseeing the funding in (a); (c) what is the complete and itemized list of funding recipients from the March 2, 2017, pledge of \$20 million for sexual and reproductive health services, broken down by (i) country, (ii) organization or individual, (iii) title of program or project, (iv) amount received; (d) which government department and section is overseeing the funding in (c); (e) which line in the 2017-18 Main Estimates for the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development do the funding commitment in (a) and (c) fall under; (f) will any funds referred to in (a) or (c), which are directed to countries or jurisdictions where abortion is illegal or restricted, be used to pay for illegal abortion services; and (g) what oversight, tracking, or planning mechanisms have been established and applied to ensure that funds mentioned in (a) and (c) respect and abide by all laws of recipient countries?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1203—Mr. Phil McColeman:

With regard to the report tabled in the House of Commons on September 28, 2017, titled "Failing to Strike the Right Balance for Transparency—Recommendations to improve Bill C-58: An Act to Amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and to Make Consequential Amendments to Other Acts": broken down by each of the 28 recommendations made by the Information Commissioner of Canada in the report, does the government plan to act upon the recommendation and if so, how?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1204—Mr. Phil McColeman:

With regard to the government's ongoing campaign for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, since November 4, 2015: (a) what are the itemized details of all expenditures to date including amount spent on (i) travel, (ii) accommodation, (iii) personnel, (iv) gifts; (b) what is the total of all expenditures referred to in (a); and (c) for gifts referred to in (a) what are the details of each gift, including (i) description, (ii) value or price, (iii) price per item, (iv) number of items, (v) date item was purchased, (vi) date item was gifted, (vii) country whose representatives received the gift?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1205—Mr. Ted Falk:

With regard to the recent influx of asylum claimants since January 1, 2017: (a) how much does it cost Canada Border Services Agency to process asylum seekers who have valid identification; (b) how much does it cost the government to detain asylum seekers; (c) what is the per day cost of detaining an asylum seeker; (d) what is the average time of detention of each asylum seeker; (e) how much does it cost the government to screen asylum claimants for health and security concerns; (f) how many asylum claimants have failed to appear at their scheduled Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada hearings; (g) what is the total number of asylum claimant cases; (h) what is the appearance rate for asylum claimants in cases referred to in (g); (i) in cases referred to in (g), how many asylum claimants received a successful ruling; (j) what is the current number of asylum seekers since the beginning of December 2016 who entered through non-traditional ports of entry; and (k) what are the details of any expenditures to third party organizations which have housed or provided assistance to asylum seekers since November 4, 2015, including for each the (i) vendor or recipient, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) location, (v) description of good or service provided, (vi) number of asylum seekers housed by funding recipient, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1206—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:**

With regard to the appointment of Dr. Mona Nemer as the Chief Science Advisor: (a) how many candidates were considered for the position; (b) how many candidates were interviewed for the position; (c) what is the salary range of the position; (d) what is the overall budget for the Chief Science Advisor; (e) what is the rationale for putting the Office of the Chief Science Advisor in Innovation, Science and Economic Development; (f) when was the decision referred to in (e) made; (g) who made the decision referred to in (e); (h) what is the estimated cost of establishing the Office of the Chief Science Advisor, broken down by item; and (i) what is the estimated yearly operating cost for the Office of the Chief Science Advisor, broken down by item?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1209—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to the government delegation which travelled to New York for the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017: (a) who were the members of the delegation, broken down by (i) Members of Parliament, (ii) staff from the Office of the Prime Minister, (iii) staff of Members of Parliament, (iv) other government staff; and (b) what were the total costs for the delegation, broken down by (i) airfare, (ii) hotel accommodations, (iii) taxi rides, (iv) Uber rides, (v) limousine services, (vi) private shuttle services, (vii) per diems, (viii) other meal costs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1210—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to government travel for consultations on tax reform proposals in the months of July, August, and September 2017: (a) who travelled for the consultations, including (i) Department of Finance staff, (ii) Members of Parliament, (iii) staff from the Office of the Prime Minister, (iv) staff from offices of Members of Parliament, (v) other government employees; (b) for the individuals in (a), and broken down by category, what were their costs for participating, broken down by (i) airfare, (ii) hotel accommodations, (iii) taxi rides, (iv) Uber rides, (v) limousine services, (vi) per diems, (vii) other meals; (c) in which cities did the consultations take place; (d) which groups did the government meet with during the consultations; (e) how many people attended the meetings; (f) what were the total costs for meeting rooms and hall rentals for the consultations; (g) for each of the consultations, what were the names of the (i) buildings, (ii) meeting rooms, (iii) rooms rented, where consultations took place; and (h) what was the capacity for each of the rooms booked for each consultation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1212—Mr. Bob Saroya :

With regard to the process for Access to Information requests submitted to the Privy Council Office: as of October 2, 2017, which staff in the Office of the Prime Minister routinely has access to completed Access to Information requests prior to the documents being released to the requestor?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1213—Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to official gifts given by the government or individuals representing the government since November 5, 2015: (a) what are the details of all gifts given which were provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage's "Gift Bank", including (i) date, (ii) value, (iii) person who presented the gift, (iv) person who received the gift, (v) description of the gift; and (b) what are the details of all other official gifts given, including (i) date, (ii) value, (iii) person who presented the gift, (iv) person who received the gift, (v) description of the gift, (vi) date the gift was purchased, (vii) store where the gift was purchased from, including its name and location?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1214—Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to the Mandate letters of Ministers who were either sworn into Cabinet, or received new Cabinet positions on August 28, 2017: (a) why were their Mandate letters not posted on the Prime Minister's website as of October 2, 2017; (b) when did each of the concerned Ministers receive their Mandate letter; (c) for Ministers who have not yet received their Mandate letters, when will they receive it; and (d) what is the website addresses where the contents of the Mandate letters for the Ministers impacted by the Cabinet shuffle of August 28, 2017, are located?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1215—Mrs. Cathy McLeod:

With regard to the appointment of Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux as the Special Representative for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs on reforming the First Nations Child and Family Service program: (a) was there an open competition for the position; and (b) if the answer to (a) is in the affirmative (i) how many applicants were there, (ii) how many applicants were interviewed for the position, (iii) what were the required qualifications for the position, (iv) when was the competition closing date, (v) when was Dr. Wesley-Esquimaux informed that she would receive the appointment, (vi) who told Dr. Wesley-Esquimaux that she would receive the appointment, (vii) who made the final decision with regard to whom would receive this appointment?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1216—Mr. David Anderson:

With regard to funding, grants, contributions, or other expenditures to the Walrus Foundation or to the Walrus Talks series, since January 1, 2016, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details including (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) recipient, (iv) description of the expenditure or purpose of funding, (v) file number, (vi) program under which the expenditure was made?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1220—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to the statement made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in the House of Commons on April 6, 2017, that "In communities like Onion Lake, for example, we have been involved in working with leadership in that community, and we want to ensure that we can increase transparency and accountability with its First Nation leadership and all of its organizations": (a) does the government consider this statement to be accurate; and (b) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, what are the details of all the consultations conducted by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs with Onion Lake, including for each consultation the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) name of individuals consulted, (iv) recommendations that were made to the Minister?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1221—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the government's letter of request to the United States government regarding the potential purchase of 18 Super Hornet aircraft, at the time the letter was sent: (a) when did the government expect the first aircraft to be delivered; (b) what was the government's anticipated delivery schedule for all 18 aircraft; (c) when did the government request the final delivery of the aircraft; (d) what was the government's intended training schedule for Super Hornet pilots and crews; (e) when did the government expect the first Super Hornet to be fully operational; (f) when did the government expect the full fleet of Super Hornets to be fully operational in order to be able to take part in NATO and NORAD operations; (g) when did the government plan to make its first payment towards the acquisition cost of the 18 aircraft; and (h) when did the government expect to make its final payment towards the acquisition costs of the 18 aircraft?

(Return tabled)

*Speaker's Ruling***Question No. 1222—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:**

With regard to operations at the Lacolle border checkpoint and the Montreal and Cornwall urban checkpoints since November 1, 2015: (a) how many Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers were required to work at the Lacolle checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total number of officers per year, (ii) total number of officers per month, (iii) total number of officers working on a permanent basis, (iv) total number of officers working on a temporary basis; (b) for each month between November 2015 and September 2017, where did the officers who worked at the Lacolle checkpoint come from, broken down by the (i) number of officers by province of origin, (ii) number of officers by border checkpoint of origin, (iii) number of officers by private business or company of origin; (c) how many officers from a private business or company did the CBSA hire to work at the Lacolle checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total number of officers per year, (ii) total number of officers per month, (iii) officers' company of origin; (d) for each month between November 2015 and September 2017, what were the monthly costs of operations at the Lacolle checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total monthly budget, (ii) officers' salaries, (iii) officers' claimed overtime, (iv) officers' claimed per diems, (v) officers' transportation, (vi) officers' accommodation, (vii) other bonuses paid to officers, (viii) salary and per diem amounts paid to officers of private companies hired by the government or the CBSA; (e) how many CBSA officers were required to work at the Montreal checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total number of officers per year, (ii) total number of officers per month, (iii) total number of officers working on a permanent basis, (iv) total number of officers working on a temporary basis; (f) for each month between November 2015 and September 2017, where did the officers who worked at the Montreal checkpoint come from, broken down by the (i) number of officers by province of origin, (ii) number of officers by border checkpoint of origin, (iii) number of officers by private business or company of origin; (g) how many officers from a private business or company did the CBSA hire to work at the Montreal checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total number of officers per year, (ii) total number of officers per month, (iii) officers' company of origin; (h) for each month between November 2015 and September 2017, what were the monthly costs of operations at the Montreal checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total monthly budget, (ii) officers' salaries, (iii) officers' claimed overtime, (iv) officers' claimed per diems, (v) officers' transportation, (vi) officers' accommodation, (vii) other bonuses paid to officers, (viii) salary and per diem amounts paid to officers of private companies hired by the government or the CBSA; (i) how many CBSA officers were required to work at the Cornwall checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total number of officers per year, (ii) total number of officers per month, (iii) total number of officers working on a permanent basis, (iv) total number of officers working on a temporary basis; (j) for each month between November 2015 and September 2017, where did the officers who worked at the Cornwall checkpoint come from, broken down by the (i) number of officers by province of origin, (ii) number of officers by border checkpoint of origin, (iii) number of officers by private business or company of origin; (k) how many officers from a private business or company did the CBSA hire to work at the Cornwall checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total number of officers per year, (ii) total number of officers per month, (iii) officers' company of origin; and (l) for each month between November 2015 and September 2017, what were the monthly costs of operations at the Cornwall checkpoint, broken down by the (i) total monthly budget, (ii) officers' salaries, (iii) officers' claimed overtime, (iv) officers' claimed per diems, (v) officers' transportation, (vi) officers' accommodation, (vii) other bonuses paid to officers, (viii) salary and per diem amounts paid to officers of private companies hired by the government or the CBSA?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1223—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the government contracts awarded to Morneau Shepell since January 2010: (a) for each contract, what is the (i) value of the contract, (ii) description of the services offered, (iii) date and duration of the contract, (iv) internal tracking number or contract file number; and (b) for each contract in (a), was it sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1225—Mr. David Sweet:

With regard to the plaque for the National Holocaust Monument, which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on September 27, 2017, and removed on October 3, 2017: (a) who gave final approval for the text on the plaque; and (b) what is the highest ranking individual in the Office of the Prime Minister who approved the text?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1226—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to changes requested by the government to Wikipedia pages since November 5, 2015, and broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details of any requested changes, including (i) date of the request, (ii) requested change, (iii) title of pages related to the requested change, (iv) title of the individual requesting the change, (v) was the requested change made, (vi) reason for requesting the change?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1227—Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to government expenditures on travel for stakeholders since January 1, 2016: what are the details of each travel, including (i) total amount, (ii) dates, (iii) point of departure, (iv) destination, (v) breakdown of expenses (airfare, hotel accommodation, per diems, other), (vi) who authorized the travel, (vii) name, title, and organization represented, broken down by stakeholder?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on November 2, 2017, by the hon. member for Thornhill concerning allegedly misleading statements by the Prime Minister.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Thornhill for having raised this matter, as well as the parliamentary secretary to the government House Leader and the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for their comments.

In raising the matter, the member for Thornhill alleged that the Prime Minister had misled the House when, during oral questions on October 31, 2017, he stated that the Minister of Finance was the only minister currently holding controlled assets indirectly. This, the member indicated, contradicted information provided by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

[Translation]

In turn, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader noted that, in fact, the then Ethics Commissioner herself declared that she was not at odds with the Prime Minister's statement. Furthermore, he explained that the established criteria used to determine if a member has deliberately misled the House had not been met and characterized the matter as simply a dispute as to facts.

Government Orders

[English]

Members know well that in any case in which the veracity of what a member of the House has said is called into question, the Chair's role is very limited to the review of the statements made in a proceeding of Parliament. In other words, the Chair cannot comment on what transpires outside of the deliberations of the House or its committees.

[Translation]

Speaker Milliken reiterated this essential principle in a ruling of February 10, 2011, which can be found at page 8030 of the Debates:

It may sound overly technical but the reality is that when adjudicating cases of this kind, the Chair is obliged to reference material fully and properly before the House.

[English]

In keeping with this limitation, any comments made by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner outside of our proceedings are not officially before the House. That is not to say that the right and need of members to receive accurate information is in any way diminished, for it is not, but it does place boundaries on what comments the Chair can review.

In addition, as with any charge that a member has misled the House, the Speaker must uphold the requirement that the three pre-established conditions be met; that is, the statement must be misleading, the member must know in making the statement that it is incorrect, and finally, there must be proof that the member deliberately intended to mislead the House by making the statement.

[Translation]

In the absence of these criteria, the matter is usually found to be simply a question of debate. In a ruling from January 31, 2008, which can be found at page 2435 of the Debates, Speaker Milliken stated that:

...Any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of a minister's response to an oral question is a matter of debate; it is not a matter for the Speaker to judge.

• (1530)

[English]

A review of the evidence officially before the House leaves the Chair unable to conclude that on the basis of exchanges last October 31, the member was unable to fulfill his parliamentary functions. Accordingly, I do not find that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT, 2017

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not always a pleasure, but it is definitely an honour for me to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters.

This is a strange second reading debate. To provide some context for the people listening at home, we are supposed to be at second reading. We would normally debate the bill at second reading and eventually vote to refer it to committee if we agreed with the general principles of the bill. What is happening here, which is highly unusual, is that we are not at second reading; rather we are debating whether to refer it to committee before second reading. What this means, essentially, is that the Liberals brought forward a bill but have since realized that they are not satisfied with their own bill. They want to send it to committee so it can be fixed up a bit before sending it back to the House for second reading. I have never seen this before. It is highly unusual to proceed in this manner, and it is inappropriate. This government appears to be improvising and making things up as it goes along.

If the bill is no good, the government should scrap it and come back with a better bill. What is happening here today is ridiculous. We are talking about sending a bill directly to committee rather than debating it at second reading. This is absolutely unbelievable.

Where did this Bill C-59 come from? Members will recall that its predecessor was the Conservatives' infamous Bill C-51. This is a despicable bill that utterly fails to protect human rights. I will spend the next few minutes examining the bill in greater detail.

First of all, during the election campaign, the Liberals said they would repeal Bill C-51, which, as I said, was Mr. Harper's atrocious security bill. The government made us wait two years before coming up with something, and what it finally came up with does not even come close to solving the problem. In fact, this bill will allow the government to continue violating Canadians' privacy and will criminalize dissent, just as the Harper government's Bill C-51 did. This is an important issue I would like to take a closer look at.

There are some serious problems in the bill with respect to protecting privacy, especially in terms of sharing out-of-control information. The amendments to the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act are mostly superficial. In no way does this fulfill the promise we expected the Liberals to keep.

This is an omnibus bill that seeks to provide a legal framework allowing the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, to store sensitive metadata on totally innocent Canadians, a practice that the Federal Court ruled to be illegal. This bill does not really solve any problems. It creates new ones. There is currently a crisis of confidence in our national security agencies, especially CSIS, not because of the agencies, but because of the existing legislation. These agencies push the boundaries of the law and they are not transparent about it, unfortunately. As far as security and intelligence are concerned, Canadians have to be sure that every Government of Canada department and agency is working effectively to ensure Canadians' safety, but also to preserve our rights and freedoms. That is the problem with Bill C-51. The government wanted to make Canadians safer, but there was nothing in that bill that provided greater safety or security.

Government Orders

•(1535)

However, a lot of the bill's provisions took away some of the rights enjoyed by Canadians. They actively undermined the privacy of Canadians and could potentially result in the criminalization of vulnerable groups, for example, environmentalists or advocates of other causes. I will explain later why I am mentioning this.

First, Bill C-51, known as the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, was passed with little debate. It was not really necessary. That is why we stated several times that this law weakened our security and diminished our right to the protection of privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

This clearly shows that Bill C-51 was ill-conceived. For that reason, we did not support it. We believe that Bill C-51 must be repealed in full and that we must start over; it was Stephen Harper's bill, it did not work, and we have to scrap it right quick.

I would remind the House that, in 2016, the Federal Court ruled on the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's mass data collection. It found that CSIS illegally kept sensitive, personal electronic information for over 10 years. In this landmark ruling, Justice Simon Noël said that the CSIS had failed in its duty to inform the court of its data collection program and ruled that what it had done was illegal. What did the Liberals do in response? They decided that since such activity was illegal, they would draft a bill to make it legal.

Come on. The Federal Court said that what CSIS was doing did not make any sense, that it was illegal, and that it violated privacy rights, and so the Liberal government decided to make those illegal activities legal. That does not make any sense. I can see why the Liberals would want to send this to committee to make amendments and gut this bill. That is shameful.

The other problem that is not mentioned in this bill but that is important to talk about is all of the ministerial directives related to torture. That is very serious. It is something that I care a lot about, and I am convinced that everyone in the greater Drummond area sent me here to talk about this. It is extremely important.

We are calling on the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to repeal and replace the 2010 ministerial directive on torture to ensure that Canada stands for an absolute prohibition on torture. Specifically, we want to ensure that in no circumstances will Canada use information from foreign countries that could have been obtained using torture or share information that is likely to result in torture.

Canada says that it will not torture, but other countries will torture for us. The government would then take this information and impose sanctions.

This makes no sense. Torture must be denounced everywhere. We must never use information obtained under torture. Everyone knows that people will say anything when they are being tortured. Torture does not work and is immoral.

I hope that this government will wake up, because this goes back a long time. The Liberals have been in power for two years and they still have not improved the situation. We must show integrity, we must be strong, and we must say no to torture everywhere in the

world. We must not use information obtained through torture or that may lead to torture.

In closing, since the government itself does not think that this is a good bill and wants to send it directly to committee, without going through second reading, I propose that, instead, the government withdraw the bill and introduce new, common sense legislation with the help of the other parties.

•(1540)

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the member opposite has misconstrued recent Federal Court decisions. The recent decision indicates that the existing provisions of the CSIS Act do not provide CSIS with the authority to collect and retain data that has no direct connection with a security threat. However, the court indicated that the act is showing its age and suggested a renewed consideration of the proper tools that CSIS needs for its operations. I would like to ask my hon. colleague what, in his mind, those tools would be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her very relevant question.

The answer is certainly not in Bill C-59. Why? The colleague who just asked me the question said herself that this bill does not work. She said herself that that the bill must be sent directly to committee to be amended because there are a lot of problems with it. If my colleague cannot defend this bill as it now stands, she should withdraw it and work with the opposition to come up with solutions that will respect civil rights and will not allow for the use of information obtained under torture. That is unacceptable.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his speech.

Bill C-59 is supposed to correct Bill C-51, which was condemned by pretty much everyone in Canada at the time. However, Bill C-59 does not make all the necessary changes. It misses the mark and is incomplete. For example, the definition of national security still contains some aspects of the Conservative definition. The Liberals did not change it. National security still encompasses interference with infrastructure deemed critical or important.

Does that mean that the secret service could use its resources to stop peaceful protestors, for example, environmentalists or indigenous groups that seek to oppose the building of a new pipeline?

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, that was precisely our criticism of Bill C-51. I remember hearing about people who were spied on or investigated for no reason. Birdwatchers, for example. The authorities would not leave birdwatchers in peace. That is a perfect example of how this kind of bill can get out of hand.

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People in Drummond are very concerned about shale gas and fracking. This is still a concern even though there is kind of a moratorium on it at the moment. If a government announced plans to develop shale gas in Quebec, my constituents would be the first to speak out against that because there is a lot of opposition to that kind of development in Quebec. This bill is flawed. A lot of my constituents could end up on a list or be spied on with no oversight. This bill has never made sense. The government even said so itself. We need to scrap it and go back to square one.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment briefly on the fact that Bill C-59 contains not a single measure or provision to fix the ludicrous no fly list situation that results in people whose names are similar to those of alleged terrorists being barred from flying. That includes little six-, seven-, and eight-year-old boys and girls.

How is it that the authorities cannot tell the difference between a kid in elementary school and an alleged terrorist?

• (1545)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense. This is further proof that this bill's focus is not in the right place.

Earlier I talked about information obtained by torture that the government continues to use. The same thing applies to what are known as no-fly lists. Some children are not being allowed on flights. There are at least three children that cannot fly. It is completely ridiculous. The Liberals have not been able to resolve this issue in two years. Frankly, that is pathetic.

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as someone who worked for a year as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and sits on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I am eager to talk about a bill as important as Bill C-59. This bill is especially important to me because Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, one of the unfortunate victims of the attack in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, lived in Sainte-Julie.

In my opinion, Bill C-59 is the greatest reform to Canada's national security framework since the creation of CSIS in 1984. It is therefore completely appropriate to refer the bill to committee prior to second reading. The main upside of that option is that it will allow us to work on the bill before it is passed in principle, giving us more flexibility in crafting the legislation. It will also give the opposition parties a chance to propose amendments that reflect their values and their vision of national security in Canada.

I have great esteem for my fellow members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. By discussing the bill in committee before it is passed in principle, we will be able to have an in-depth debate. I believe that my colleagues and I will discuss it fully, provided that they want to participate in the discussion, of course. Everyone wins in a process like this.

Last year, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security undertook a study on Canada's national security framework. The committee members began the study in September 2016 and concluded it in April 2017. The committee heard from 138 witnesses and received 39 submissions. It also travelled to five major Canadian cities to hear concerns from Canadians across the country.

This study is part of a larger process. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness launched a parallel national public consultation with the release of a green paper. We received more than 75,000 responses online or by email to this consultation. That is a historic number of people consulted on a government bill. On a personal note, I had the opportunity to lead more than a dozen of these consultations in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. We heard all kinds of different responses, but it is important for Canadians to be involved, and they showed interest throughout the consultations. We took responses into account and considered them during the drafting of Bill C-59.

When this exhaustive process was completed, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security published the report entitled "Protecting Canadians and their Rights: A New Road Map for Canada's National Security". Public Safety Canada also published a report entitled "What We Learned". This led to Bill C-59, which the minister tabled in the House in June 2017.

After spending the summer discussing the bill and familiarizing ourselves with it, it is now time to debate it. I would like to quote the Canadian Bar Association:

Promising public safety as an exchange for sacrificing individual liberties and democratic safeguards is not, in our view, justifiable or realistic. Both are essential and complementary in a free and democratic society.

As mentioned by the member for Oakville North—Burlington, this quote is found at the very beginning of the introduction to the report "Protecting Canadians and their Rights". In my opinion, the members of the committee sought to strike a balance between these considerations in this report.

I want to emphasize that striking a balance between security and rights and freedoms is vital to establishing a new national security framework. The National Security and Intelligence Committee for Parliamentarians will soon begin its work and Canada will no longer be the only Five Eyes country that does not have parliamentary oversight of intelligence activities.

With Bill C-59 that is before us, we will address other gaps, primarily by creating the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, which will review all 17 federal agencies with a national security mandate.

• (1550)

This enables Canada to fill a significant gap with respect to our partners. The government will create an intelligence commissioner, who will oversee the legality of the authorizations given to CSIS and the CSE. Furthermore, Bill C-59 will amend the Communications Security Establishment Act to give the CSE its own legislative framework and modernize our approach to cybercrimes.

Government Orders

In addition to these advances, the bill addresses CSIS's disruption powers and will provide a data collection framework for CSIS. The Secure Air Travel Act will be amended to address problems with false positives. The Security of Canada Information Sharing Act will be amended to specify the nature of information transmitted among government agencies.

Lastly, the government will address several calls to amend the Criminal Code to re-examine terrorist-related offences and recognition with conditions. I will share with the House the fact that I myself was once a privileged member of the intelligence community. A number of things spring to my mind. The very nature of information and information sharing is paramount, especially in times like these, in 2017, when security is increasingly precarious. We live in one of the most beautiful countries that is committed to defending rights and freedoms, and we cannot compromise one at the expense of the other.

It is important to redefine the role of CSIS. Let us talk about metadata. As my colleague from Drummond said, the law was very clear. The court's ruling was very clear. My colleague said earlier that it is not the men and women of CSIS who somehow handicapped the procedures that landed them in court and got them an unfavourable ruling. It was the law. It is quite clear that the reality of information sharing and the nature of the levels of information that have to be managed in today's society call for a modernization of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. That is precisely what Bill C-59 is trying to address.

It is crucial to act in an informed manner and to have concrete operations with full knowledge of the facts. This full knowledge is based on better information and better information sharing, according to the rule of law and the regulations. There are 17 different agencies. The organization that will oversee those 17 agencies will not only guarantee Canadians that the rules surrounding information and privacy are being followed, but it will also bring us up to par and put us on the cutting edge of technology like our partners, to ensure that the latest security requirements are met.

Let us talk about screening for passengers on the no-fly list. There are no children on the no-fly list. Is that clear? There are no children under the age of 18 on the no-fly list. Opposition members need to stop fearmongering. We understand that sometimes more than one person can have the same name, but it is a question of properly identifying individuals to ensure that the right person is prohibited from flying.

Past problems have been addressed. Past problems have been shared with the department and measures have been taken. As the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness announced this morning, measures have been put in place to deal with this sort of problem, from both an operational and a technological perspective. I think that, rather than coming to a complete standstill, starting from scratch, and finding ourselves back in medieval times, we need to modernize our situation. Bill C-59 is the answer.

• (1555)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. I can sense his conviction in defending Bill C-59.

I would like to ask the same question that I asked the member for Drummond. It had to do with the concerns we have about the definition of national security, which includes interference with critical infrastructure.

We think that this could be used to spy on or hinder peaceful protestors, for example, environmentalists, concerned citizens, or indigenous groups who want to oppose the construction of a pipeline.

What type of guarantee can my colleague give that this will not happen and that the bill contains the necessary provisions in that regard?

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for expressing his concerns about people's privacy and security, but it is time to stop scaring people into thinking that whenever they express their ideas, CSIS will be watching and investigating them. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms makes it clear that CSIS will not contemplate any activities that run counter to the charter.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague could talk about how this bill would strengthen accountability and transparency by creating the national security intelligence review agency and the position of the intelligence commissioner, which I hope would also complement the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians that was created by Bill C-22.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I think that Canada is a leader when it comes to protecting information and the quality of its oversight. Given the clear lack of oversight, it was crucial to determine how information would be shared among agencies. It was also important to create organizations to ensure that the information was flowing among agencies, that information sharing was happening in compliance with standards, rules, laws, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that nothing got out of hand. I think that setting up those institutions was vital and will put us on a par with or even in a leadership position with respect to our partners in terms of information.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague would give his thoughts on the importance of having the right balance. We often talk about safety, which is uppermost in the minds of all Canadians. We hear a lot about individual rights. I have always said that we are a party of the Charter of Rights and understand the importance of rights and freedoms. I would ask my colleague to provide his thoughts on how this bill would both encapsulate the importance of rights and freedoms and provide the sense of security and safety that Canadians want.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I will do more than share my own thoughts. I will convey the thoughts of the Canadians we talked to in our consultations. They were clear on their concerns about their safety and security. No one is oblivious to the events of the past few years. The Canadians we consulted were clear on the extraordinary value of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canadians themselves are divided on where the balance lies between maximizing our safety and preserving our rights and freedoms. This was a key concern to the Canadians we consulted, and it is taken into account in the proposed Bill C-59.

• (1600)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind hon. members that if they have phones or iPads that have alarms set or phone ringers, they should turn them off. It would be appreciated. It is not a big distraction, but it is rather impolite, while someone is speaking, to have a phone ring. I was talking to a colleague in the Ontario legislature, and if someone has a phone that goes off or the member is using it, the member loses it for 24 hours. I am sure we do not want to go there, and I trust everyone will show some respect for others who are speaking.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the government's intent to send Bill C-59, a national security act to amend the oversight and powers of our security agencies, directly to committee.

As I have said in this place before, the top priority of this House must be to protect all Canadians. The protection of our people should be placed ahead of political manoeuvring and should be of top concern for all members, regardless of political party. I would hope that the recent request by the Minister of Public Safety to move Bill C-59 directly to committee before second reading is in support of this ideal that the safety of Canadians comes ahead of political goals. However, I am left to wonder if this is just a disguised time allocation move or a ploy to avoid multiple votes at second reading on this omnibus bill, as per the Liberals' recent changes to Standing Order 69, or both.

Whether the government acknowledges that there are areas of this bill that might be improved is to be determined. However, my hope is that an open, thorough, and complete study of this bill will not be met with time limitations or political deadlines ahead of the goal of protecting Canadians. To do this, we need to allocate adequate time to ensure that we hear all points of view, from those who think this bill goes too far to those who feel it does not go far enough.

From my 35-year career in policing, I know full well that the playing field is not level. Our national security and policing agencies operate within the rules and are confined generally to national borders. They act in the best interests of Canadians to protect us and to ensure that the measures they undertake are reasonable and in the public interest. Those who would seek to do us harm, both foreign and domestic, are not concerned about rules or where they are from but about what they intend to do.

Empowering and supporting our security agencies is about defending the best interests of Canadians. This is why unreasonable limitations on our national security agencies will have a negative impact on protecting Canadians. Let us be clear. When we identify a specific list of activities our security and intelligence agencies can do, and then create a set of rules around using those tools, we are creating a playbook, for those seeking to do us harm, on how to avoid detection and operate outside the reach of those agencies that are set up to protect us.

Unreasonable limitations on police, judges, and national security agencies in monitoring known threats would be a mistake. Checks and balances are needed. However, we need enhanced and more effective communications and information-sharing and powers to determine threats in advance, not a limiting of those powers.

Unprecedented attacks have been witnessed repeatedly across Europe, such as the killing of innocent people for no reason other than for being members of an open, welcoming, and pluralist society. The recent events in Edmonton are a Canadian example. Officer Mike Chernyk was stabbed, yet heroically fought off an extremist attacker after being struck by a car. The suspect then went after innocent people using his vehicle.

Canadians were sickened by this attack. Such things stand in direct contrast to our Canadian values: freedom to worship, freedom of speech, and freedom from fear of random and cowardly attacks, all things that fundamentalists like ISIS are against. What concerned many Canadians was that the information about this individual being a threat was there, but nothing was done to prevent it. We knew this man was a threat, because Canadians came forward and reported him as a potential radical and suggested he could carry out an attack. The police interviewed him but could not take any further action. The same man came to Canada as a refugee after being ordered deported from the United States as a failed refugee claimant. It would be inflammatory to suggest that all illegal border-crossers are like this one, but it would also be naive to think that others like him will not attempt to abuse our flawed system. The information was there but was not used in a way that could help Canadians, and the police lacked the ability to take further action.

We owe it to those who are protecting us to give them the powers they need to act. Reducing or limiting the use of monitoring or recognizance orders does little to protect Canadians. Given that these orders come from a judge for monitoring Canadians, it seems questionable at best that monitoring suspected or known threats should be limited.

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We owe it to all those who work for the cause of protecting Canada from threats, both foreign and domestic, to ensure that the risk and execution of such attacks are mitigated. We owe it to everyday Canadians, people who are living good, honourable lives and are seeking nothing other than to live free and to support their communities.

• (1605)

It would be difficult to look into the eyes of Canadians or to explain to Edmonton officer Mike Chernyk, or to victims of abuse and violence at the hands of extremists, that we do not want to empower our security agencies to defend us, that we do not respect their integrity enough to give them the tools to do their jobs, and that we cannot trust them to act honestly and respectfully.

I am reminded of what our former prime minister said in his speech in the wake of the attack on Parliament Hill and the death of Nathan Cirillo:

We are also reminded that attacks on our security personnel and on our institutions of governance are by their very nature attacks on our country, on our values, on our society, on us Canadians, as a free and democratic people who embrace human dignity for all.

But let there be no misunderstanding. We will not be intimidated. Canada will never be intimidated. In fact this will lead us to strengthen our resolve and redouble our efforts, and those of our national security agencies, to take all necessary steps to identify and counter threats, and keep Canada safe here at home. Just as it will lead us to strengthen our resolve and redouble our efforts to work with our allies around the world, and fight against the terrorist organizations who brutalize those in other countries with the hope of bringing their savagery to our shores. They will have no safe haven....

...I have every confidence that Canadians will pull together, with the kind of firm solidarity that has seen our country through many challenges. Together we will remain vigilant against those at home or abroad who wish to harm us.

There must be an appropriate balance between empowering our front-line security and police agencies to do their jobs while respecting the rights of Canadians. I would like to believe that all members of this House share that sentiment.

With our tax system, we compel everyone to provide an honest and accurate accounting of their finances and to file it with the CRA. We then entrust a select group of people to review those filings to identify any potential issues. Those thought to be in violation of the CRA rules are audited, and if guilty, are sanctioned. Throughout that process, there are checks and balances. With a responsibility far more critical than tax collection, that being the protection of Canadian values, the protection of Canadian lives, the integrity of our economy, and the protection of our very way of life, why would we expect a less rigorous national security program than that for our tax system? Why would we say that we are subject to scrutiny for potentially leaving something out of our taxes but not if we are planning to attack our national security and public safety?

I welcome the opportunity that a thorough and complete review of this legislation represents: a chance to ensure that our police and national security agencies have the appropriate powers to do their jobs to protect us.

As a Christian, I am taught and believe in forgiveness, but nowhere does my faith say that we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to becoming victims of those who would do us harm.

Let us all work towards the balance in this legislation that would provide tools for our security agencies, respect our rule of law, and provide oversight and direction to our intelligence and security agencies. Most of all, let us put the protection of Canadians first and foremost.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former Stephen Harper government was largely repudiated for its work on Bill C-51, its national security bill. Our government's bill really tries to fix the issues in Bill C-51 by striking a balance. Our bill would see the tightening of the definition of terrorist propaganda and would protect the right to advocate and protest. It would also upgrade the no-fly list and would ensure the paramountcy of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I wonder if the member from Medicine Hat could explain some ways that he sees that this bill would actually be an improvement over Bill C-51.

• (1610)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I am reviewing the bill to find some good points. I am challenged by the fact that there seems to be a slippery slope toward defending those who would do us harm in this country, that we are going to limit the authorities for recognizance and such orders, and that we would limit the ability of security agencies to do what Bill C-51 allowed them to do without the time restraints that could be in effect.

However, I am optimistic that the move by the current government to bring this bill to committee before second reading will allow an opportunity for all parties to look at the bill, to review it clause by clause, and to ensure that a non-partisan approach to public safety and national security is evident and available to all Canadians once this bill comes back to the House.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech, but I do not share his optimism with respect to the bill going to committee.

Since the changes to the Standing Orders have taken place, this is the first time that a bill has been sent to committee in advance of second reading. The cynic in me tells me that perhaps the Liberals are doing this because they do not want the proper scrutiny of it. The government also knows that it controls the committees. Therefore, the issue of whether opposition amendments to the bill would be accepted remains to be seen.

However, at the beginning of his speech, the hon. member talked about political manoeuvring. He did show some cynicism towards that. I would like to ask the hon. member what he thinks the reason is that the government would move the bill to committee in advance of second reading.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I guess my optimism comes from my naïveté. I am new here, one year in the House, and I appreciate that I may not see things the way others with experience do. However, I believe and hope that national security and public safety, as I said at the front end, are the number one priority in moving the bill forward.

Government Orders

I am concerned that, because of the precedent of having the bill go straight to committee before second reading, there may be some behind-the-scenes political games being played. I would beseech the government to ensure that does not happen, that there is no time allocation and that this is not a ploy to invoke a different type of time allocation, and that it is not a ploy to avoid the opportunity to have multiple votes on an omnibus bill, which is a great possibility. I would hope that the safety of Canadians, the safety of Canada and our national security, are of number one importance, and that none of this political manoeuvring will occur.

In direct response to my colleague, I would say that the proof is going to be determined in how this plays out in committee, in how willing the committee will be in hearing from everybody on both sides of this argument, those who believe we have gone too far, and those who believe we have not gone far enough. We will see at the end of the day whether best intentions and the best interest of Canada and Canadian security are what the government was actually after.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the motion that proposes to send Bill C-59 to committee before second reading, something that has not been done thus far in this Parliament. Debate, of course, is crucial when we are discussing something as significant to Canadians as their safety insofar as national security is concerned, as well as their rights as citizens in this country. I want to use my time to ask my colleagues and Canadians who may be watching, with respect to national security, what kind of country do we want to be? How can we strike the appropriate balance, giving our national security agencies the powers they need to do the job to protect us and at the same time protecting Canadian values? The first question is a little broad for a 10-minute speech, but my answer to the second one is very simple. We have to approach this task with great caution and open debate.

Bill C-51 was brought in by the Harper Conservatives, the former government. It was nothing short of disastrous. Bill C-51 provoked the largest demonstrations in my riding of Victoria in recent history. There were town halls with people spilling out into the streets, and anxiety on behalf of people from all walks of life in our community. The consensus was clear that the legislation was open to abuse and was far too wide. The language was vague and permissive. People were unsure where they stood as Canadians and what their rights would mean under that new legislation. The Liberals did nothing, except to say that they liked part of it, they did not like other parts. They refused to go along with the NDP's request that the bill be repealed in its entirety, and promised to repeal the problematic elements. Therefore, what we have before us is a 138-page statute with nine parts, which is a comprehensive attempt, after two years of consultation, to get it right. The question is on whether they have.

It is our contention that this poorly conceived bill should not be supported in the first place and needs to be repealed. That is not a new position. My colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke introduced Bill C-303, which simply asked that Bill C-51 be repealed. That continues to be our view on what should occur in this situation. We think that the bill is not in the interests of Canadians and should be rejected outright.

Since the Liberals voted in favour of Bill C-51, instead of scrapping it and beginning anew, they created Bill C-59, which was supposed to correct the numerous deficiencies of the former

legislation. They brought in a green paper and consulted for two years. That green paper was criticized for its lack of neutrality and for favouring the national security side as a preoccupation over civil liberties concerns and the right for peaceful protest, freedom of speech, lawful assembly, and dissent. The Liberals assured Canadians that the most problematic areas would be repealed. I am afraid that the resulting bill has not done that, and several problematic elements remain.

However, there is much in the bill that I wish to say is right. For example, the creation of the super SIRC, the expanded oversight committee, is an excellent step. There are many other things, however, that are deeply problematic, and which, if time permits, I would like to talk about.

There are some elements, in particular involving the Communications Security Establishment, the shadowy agency that Canadians know from U.S. TV to be our counterpart to the National Security Agency in that country, the NSA. There are problems, for example, with its new cyber-ability to modify, disrupt, and delete “anything on or through the global...structure”, which sounds a little Orwellian. It would seem that the mandate blurs the line between intelligence gathering and active cyber-activities, as has been pointed out by Professors Forcese and Roach as well. It is under the national defence department, as it has been for many years, and the bill would deal with national defence matters such as CSE, and other areas as well.

● (1615)

The bill would do nothing to address the ministerial directive on torture. The directive needs to be acknowledged. It is not part of the bill, it is merely a directive. A new directive was introduced only last year, and it failed to forbid the RCMP, CBSA, or CSIS from using information that was largely extracted through overseas torture. The new instruction amounts to only semantic changes and would not do anything to ensure our public safety, because it is notorious that information obtained through torture is unreliable. The government did nothing to address that in a meaningful way in this legislation. It could have, and chose not to. This legislation does not go far enough in addressing the glaring omissions and problems of Bill C-51.

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Michael Vonn, who is with the BC Civil Liberties Association, has also spoken about the misguided process of amending this flawed legislation. She said, “The bill does several things to try to reign in the unprecedented surveillance powers created by [the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act]...”. That is one of the parts of this new legislation. She went on to say that as there was “no credible justification for [that act] that was ever made, it would have been much better to repeal it and introduce any clarifying amendments required in the federal Privacy Act.” Again, that was another opportunity lost. Her comments highlight that measures and policies were brought into effect without any demonstrated justification that they were needed to keep Canadians safe.

We are in the strange position of rushing through the appropriate steps of amending practices that may not be necessary in the first place. After Canadians have waited two years for badly needed action on national security, why has the government not used its time appropriately to ensure that we had legislation that, in the words of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, “gets it right”. I implore my colleagues in government to think differently than the government before it. If there is truly a commitment for openness, transparency, and accountability, let us debate the bill at second reading and work together to fix the half measures that are in it.

A procedural issue is before us as a result of this unusual move by the government to move the bill to committee before second reading. As I understand it, the motion before us would send the bill to committee before the usual debate at second reading. Therefore, the Standing Orders will not necessarily apply to enable the Speaker to break out the nine parts of this lengthy legislation so we could vote in favour of some and oppose others. Surely, the Liberals are better than this.

Rather than resorting to the Stephen Harper trick of saying we voted against this omnibus legislation to keep Canadians safe, which generally was done in all the other Conservative omnibus bills, why would the government not allow this to be broken out the way that the Speaker has the authority to do? There are some parts of the bill that are worthy of support. However, the Liberals' trick, following in the footsteps of Mr. Harper, would require those of us who are opposed to some of the very contentious issues to vote against it all. That is a trick that is unworthy of the minister and his government. Measures that compromise our charter rights and our privacy rights do our country harm, and those are the reasons we called for the repeal of Bill C-51 more than two years ago.

In speaking about privacy, in the fall of 2016, a Federal Court ruling took CSIS to task for storing sensitive metadata on Canadians who were not suspected of anything. The court found that for 10 years, CSIS had been illegally storing information derived from some of its wiretaps. The data involved metadata such as source information, emails, phone numbers, and the like. This legislation would not change that. It would allow it to continue.

By way of conclusion, we have to ask ourselves whether we want a country where our security services have a lot of information about many citizens, with a view to detecting national security threats, but for which there is no demonstrable harm caused by any of those citizens. The powers with respect to the charter are extremely complicated. I would invite people to look at clause 98 and figure out whether or not the courts would be able to limit our charter rights

in a warrant. It is very problematic. We must do it better, and we need to have that opportunity as quickly as possible.

• (1620)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that Bill C-59 is spotty in addressing some issues that were found in Bill C-51 extremely well. Here I refer to part 3 at the time and its “thought chill” provisions, including the bizarre notion of terrorism in general on the Internet being an offence that could land someone in jail if that person could not understand what it is. This bill fails quite seriously.

On the information section, Professor Craig Forcese has made the point that we need to know that any legislation in Canada will not allow information about Canadian citizens to be shared with foreign governments in a way that imperils their safety. A lot of the bill appears to come from the decisions on the Maher Arar inquiry and on the Air India inquiry.

Regarding my hon. colleague's reference to torture, my disappointment is that no one seems to have focused on part 5 of Bill C-51, which amended the immigration act. Professor Donald Galloway of the University of Victoria was the only one to fully understand that section and to ask what Bill C-52, part 5, was trying to do in amending the immigration act. The conclusion was that it aimed to give information to judges for security certificates without having to inform them that the information was obtained by torture. I wonder if the member for Victoria has any insights as to where that section has gone, because no one is fixing it in Bill C-59.

• (1625)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her thoughtful perspective on part 5. There are nine parts to this omnibus bill, and part 5, as she pointed out, is the amendment to the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act.

This morning the minister was proud to speak about Craig Forcese and Kent Roach as validators of this great initiative, but when they gave their report card it was indeed this part, as the member suggested, that caused them the most concern. While they liked parts of the bill, they graded part 5 as a bare pass, as they put it, because it simply did not address the concerns that people like Professor Galloway have addressed from the start. This is one of the areas that needs a considerable amount of work.

Points of Order

The other one, of course, is the need for judicial warrants. It is so unclear just what the courts' powers are in light of the charter. We certainly need to get that right as well, because to suggest that our courts can somehow be in favour of what would be the promoters of charter violations is hugely problematic in a system that is governed by the rule of law.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member refers to a number of parts of the legislation that he seems to be more concerned about than others. That is quite understandable. Both the member and the preceding Conservative member talked about the way we are going through this process as outside the norm.

Given that my colleague is very knowledgeable about processes in the House, would he not acknowledge that allowing the bill to go through in this manner would allow us to make a wider assessment of the bill and its scope? That is a very important aspect of why we are having it go through this process. I would be interested in the member's thoughts on how we will be better able to deal with the wider scope of the issue by doing it this way.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, the ability to consider the scope of the bill in broader terms is welcome. What is concerning, and I may be mistaken and would welcome clarification on this point, is that because of this unusual procedure to send it to committee before it goes to second reading, I am advised that it would not necessarily allow the Speaker to break this omnibus bill into separate parts. I would like to vote in favour of the part that creates a national security and intelligence review agency, for example, but might not be in favour of part 5, as we have just been discussing. I understand that it is not going to be possible, and I find that regretful.

It allows the government to characterize members on this side of the aisle politically as simply being opposed to national security, or whatever else it wants to characterize us doing. I find that very regrettable. I hope I am mistaken in that interpretation.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING ORDER 69.1—BILL C-59

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask that you consider Standing Order 69.1 and divide certain parts of Bill C-59 before us today into separate pieces. As mentioned during today's debate, I believe that Bill C-59 is an omnibus bill as described in that standing order.

[*English*]

Standing Order 69.1 now says, in part:

(1) In the case where a government bill seeks to repeal, amend or enact more than one act, and where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked, the Speaker shall have the power to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting.

[*Translation*]

I submit that Bill C-59 fits that description.

[*English*]

We are thinking of this analysis at this time, because in your ruling of November 7 on Standing Order 69.1, you said:

Where members believe that the Standing Order should apply, I would encourage them to raise their arguments as early as possible in the process, especially given that the length of debate at a particular stage can be unpredictable.

That is what we believe we are doing today.

Here is how I see the various parts of the bill and why, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, we believe they should be divided into different parts to be voted on separately.

[*Translation*]

Let us take a look at part 1 and part 2. Part 1 enacts the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Act, and part 2 enacts the Intelligence Commissioner Act. These two parts enact two new acts and amend up to 12 existing acts.

These parts obviously create watchdogs to oversee the national security agencies.

The activities of the new agencies created under this bill would affect up to 14 federal departments. Since these parts create new agencies and enact two brand-new acts with a very specific mandate, we believe they should be voted on separately.

We believe that part 3 should be separated because it makes a significant change. It too would enact a new act, the Communications Security Establishment Act, yet another act that will amend existing acts.

[*English*]

That proposed act would also amend the National Defence Act. We know that the minister responsible for CSE is the Minister of National Defence. Again, we feel that puts certain optics around this debate, given that the Minister of Public Safety is tabling this bill, and the purpose for changing that particular piece.

Still on part 3, I do want to mention that many of these components are being painted as dealing with specific aspects of national security, more specifically terrorism, but if we look the part dealing with CSE, we see that a large part of the mandate goes beyond just terrorism. It could be individuals and, to use the colloquial term, hackers or even states that would be engaging in certain forms of cyber-activity. The proposed act would give CSE the ability to interfere and even counter certain things that might be done, which is very separate from reforming elements of the previous Bill C-51.

Parts 4 and 5 deal with metadata collection and the threat disruption powers being given to CSIS. In the case of the metadata collection, that of course is something new. In the case of threat disruption, we are obviously looking at what the specific intent of the bill was, which is to repeal and amend, in this case to amend certain things brought in under Bill C-51 in the previous Parliament.

Points of Order

We are also looking at changes to SCISA, the information-sharing regime brought in by former Bill C-51. That again leads us to argue that parts 4 and 5, given their nature and the connection they have with previous legislation that is being changed, should be looked at together.

[*Translation*]

Part 6 has to do with the Secure Air Travel Act and the no-fly list. We definitely think this needs to be separated. There are a number of important elements to consider, not to mention the issue of funding and the different work that will be done by the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Transport in co-operation with airlines.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Part 7 deals with specific changes to the Criminal Code, certain offences that were brought in under Bill C-51, and other aspects that needed to be cleaned up based on the reforms the government wishes to propose to the Criminal Code, specifically to what the previous government did in that respect. We are looking here specifically at how terrorism charges are laid and prosecuted in Canada, which is fair to argue is very distinct from dealing with cybersecurity threats or even the no-fly list. We are looking here at the way the justice system is treating these matters.

Part 8 is in the same vein because it proposes changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. It looks at those offences, but from the perspective of young offenders and, more specifically, at how to deal with those particular cases.

Parts 9 and 10 are the more procedural elements, dealing with statutory review and coming into force provisions. We believe that we can group together parts 7, 8, 9, and 10.

As you obviously know, the Standing Order currently gives you the power to divide a bill, but is limited to “the motion for second reading and reference to a committee and the motion for third reading and passage of the bill.” I am sure that could be read to mean that you do not have the power to divide the bill for a vote on a motion like the one before us to immediately refer a bill to a committee forthwith.

The government, by presenting this motion in a way that, on the surface, is well intentioned and indicates its wish to significantly amend the bill and hear experts at committee, I submit is actually attempting to circumvent Standing Order 69.1, knowing full well that this is omnibus legislation. It is trying to do so by sending this bill to committee before second reading, and therefore preventing us from going forward with the way the Standing Order is now drafted, which would mean second reading and then referral to committee. That is not how the process would take place given the motion that is before the House today.

This bill has so many components and, as the government has said, is perhaps one of the most significant changes to the various components of national security, whether oversight, CSE, or CSIS. It includes some significant changes to how national security cases are charged and prosecuted in the judicial system. It is telling that the government seems to recognize the omnibus nature of the bill in debate here today. It seems the only procedural way to hide the omnibus nature of the bill is for the government to present the

motion today to provide it with a legislative pathway that would allow it to circumvent its own new rules in the Standing Orders on omnibus provisions.

We are concerned that the Liberal government is hiding the omnibus nature of this bill from the public. From a communications point of view, we know it sounds nice to only talk about the oversight elements when experts have agreed there are very significant concerns over how cyber-weapons, as described in part 3 of the bill, would operate. We have even heard experts say it is not possible for them to fully analyze all of the elements or the entire scope of the bill, even with their own expertise. To me, that is very telling of the omnibus nature of the bill and the difficulties of undertaking a legislative process in the way proposed by the government.

While wanting to give the benefit of the doubt to the government and its good intentions to have a robust study, the feeling we get from our reading of the Standing Order seems to be that this is an attempt to do through the back door what it is forbidden from doing through the front door, thereby preventing you and the powers conferred on you in this place to separate the different aspects of the bill.

I assert that under Standing Order 69.1, the role of the Speaker is to apply the rules of the House to deal with different concepts and themes in a bill with a different vote, which is obviously what I am raising today, so that MPs can represent their constituents' views differently on each part of a bill if they believe they should and are able to vote appropriately based on the different complexities and nature of different points. As my colleague from Victoria just pointed out in his speech, the fact that we might agree with the government on going forward with certain elements of oversight is distinct from a debate on cybersecurity or one on the no-fly list, which are very different matters. Pardon my choice of words, but I believe comparing oversight to cybersecurity, the Criminal Code, and the no-fly list seems a little ludicrous, and makes it very challenging as members of Parliament to properly vote and express ourselves.

By having the bill go through before second reading, the government is arguing that it should be treated as one whole question. It is all about security. However, anything can essentially be qualified as national security. That is obviously not enough of a common element.

Government Orders

●(1640)

When we look at what these different parts would do, the new acts that would be created and the acts that would be amended, forcing MPs to vote on the creation of two new acts and the amendments of dozens of other acts, such significant acts as the National Defence Act, the CSIS Act, and others, it certainly causes problems for members of Parliament who wish to vote on these different distinct components. I also submit that it circumvents these very same omnibus rules that have been put in place by a government that said this would no longer be a practice, as we saw under the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, you stated in your November 8 ruling about the uses of Standing Order 69.1, “In my view, the spirit of the Standing Order was to provide for a separate vote when new or unrelated matters were introduced in the budget implementation bill.” I agree with the logic you expressed at the time and believe that in this case, the same logic could apply. We are, of course, dealing with new and unrelated matters that were not part of the debate leading up to the tabling of the legislation and the arguments the government made for the need to reform certain elements of legislation tabled in the previous Parliament. I hope you will agree with our assessment and arrive at the same finding here today.

Finally, I submit that Standing Order 69.1 should apply at all stages of the process, including sending the bill to committee before second reading. Again, the motion is before us today. This way, a bill that contains very different ideas would be divided in such a way at every stage that members could continue to express their views, the views of their constituents and the views of Canadians more broadly in dealing with these very distinct and complicated matters when it comes to these important reforms and not simply having to say yes or no to these sweeping reforms and then be accused of being on one side or the other when clearly there are some very distinct components.

[*Translation*]

I thank my colleagues for their indulgence. New Democrats fundamentally believe that these important and unique changes to such cornerstones of our democracy as national security and the protection of Canadians' rights and freedoms and privacy deserve to be separated in order for members to express Canadians' concerns and views through a vote. That is why I thought it was extremely important to bring all of this to the attention of the House.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you have heard throughout the day, much of the same concerns that have been brought up by the hon. member have been brought up by the official opposition. As such, we would respectfully reserve the right to comment on this in advance of any decision made by you.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly. I wish to briefly consider the matter.

[*English*]

I also thank the hon. member Barrie—Innisfil for his intervention. I hope there could be an argument made from his side in short order. It would be important to resolve this fairly soon.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Windsor West, Finance; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Health; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs.

* * *

[*English*]**NATIONAL SECURITY ACT, 2017**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak in support of sending Bill C-59, legislation that would bring Canada's national security framework into the 21st century, to committee before second reading. The bill is the result of extensive consultation, and it is in this spirit that it continues through the legislative process.

I would like to thank the numerous agencies and individuals who have offered their expertise and advice in order to ensure that Bill C-59 balances the security of Canadians with the privacy and rights of Canadians, and particularly for their participation through an open and transparent process.

Bill C-59 takes significant steps in three key areas: first, it repeals problematic elements of the former Bill C-51; second, it updates and improves national security law commensurate with and in order to keep pace with evolving threats; and third, it enhances accountability and transparency. Taken together, the proposed measures in Bill C-59 represent comprehensive and much-needed improvements to Canada's national security framework. These improvements would make Canada more secure, our agencies more accountable, and our laws more transparent and up to date.

Government Orders

It is important to understand, and perhaps self-evident, that much of Canada's national security law was written in the 1980s and well before the standard of information technology today, which has transformed the national security and intelligence landscape. Today, smartphones and wireless connectivity is a natural extension of our lives and maybe even ourselves. Therefore, it should be obvious and deeply concerning that technology today in the hands of criminals and terrorists can be used to plan and carry out horrific terror attacks against innocent people. It can also be used to influence and recruit individuals.

Cyber-threats, espionage, and foreign interference are complex and active threats, and yet rapidly-evolving technology is not the only national security challenge we face. The emergence of non-traditional threat actors, outdated legal authorities, and resource shortfalls reveal further gaps in our national security framework, compounded by an unstable international political environment marked by violence and repression, civil war, and failed and failing states throughout the world. It is a very different world from the one that existed in 1984, which is when the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act came into force.

Canada's national security law has not kept pace with the transformative changes of the past few decades. According to Justice Noël of the Federal Court in a judgment last fall, he said that the CSIS Act was showing its age with regard to new technology and developments over the past quarter century.

The safety and security of Canada and Canadians depend on having laws in place that accurately reflect today's realities. The proposed legislation before the House is the right way forward in that regard. It modernizes the CSIS Act in a responsible, accountable, and transparent way. If passed, Bill C-59 will allow our security and intelligence agencies to keep us safe by staying ahead of new and emerging threats and technologies in full respect of our rights.

First and foremost, a modernized CSIS Act would serve to address the agency's outdated legal authorities. It would also update and improve the transparency and accountability regime under which CSIS would operate, a consideration that was noted time and time again during last year's consultation process.

Bill C-59 proposes to bolster the authorities underpinning the technical capabilities of CSIS in order to modernize the collection of digital intelligence. The legislation also proposes to establish a list of distinct measures that can be authorized under warrant to reduce threats in the current environment. It would also clarify that a warrant would be required for any threat reduction measure that would limit a right or freedom protected by the charter, and that a warrant could only be issued if a judge would be satisfied that the measure would be consistent with the charter.

A strong framework would also be created within the act for data analytics that would involve data sets and that would put the rights of Canadians first. For example, once the bill is passed, CSIS will require authorization from the intelligence commissioner to acquire any Canadian data sets and Federal Court approval to retain them. This will ensure that the personal information of Canadians is subject to strict safeguards.

Under Bill C-59, foreign data sets containing information on non-Canadians would also require authorization from the commissioner.

These are only a few of the important new measures being proposed under Bill C-59 and were shaped by the tens of thousands of views that the government heard in its extensive public consultations on national security.

• (1650)

I am very proud to stand with the government in supporting Bill C-59. I look forward to its consideration by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security before second reading, so the committee will have greater latitude in how it conducts its study.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-59 seeks to address some of the errors that were put in the previous legislation around the no-fly list, especially when it comes to children in our communities. Could my hon. member speak to some of the changes that we propose to make and how it will help families right across Canada to ensure they are able to travel with their children, knowing they will not have delays.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that every member of the House is seized with today, and we are grateful to Canadians for drawing this to our attention.

There is nothing more important than our children and their safety and security. As a result, I would like to address a couple of aspects of the legislation. We know Canadians are very concerned about their rights. Freedom of expression, the right to life, liberty and security of the person, and the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure are at the forefront of this legislation. This is one aspect of that.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in an unusual situation with respect to the legislation actually going to committee in advance of second reading. We have not seen this in the House before. We just heard an NDP member ask for the Speaker to rule on certain aspects of the legislation with respect to it being an omnibus bill.

Is the reason this is going to committee in advance of second reading so members of the Liberal committee can basically ram through some of the changes they want? We do not have much faith on this side that in fact some of the suggestions, and the very valid suggestions, to change and amend the legislation are actually going to be heard by the members of that committee. Is it not a ploy on the part of the government to deal with this not in a manner that is usual, but unusual? I am interested to hear the member's comments on that.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, what Canadians do not have confidence in is Bill C-51. This has been an exhaustive consultative process, and we are very grateful to those who have spoken up for how Canadian legislation can balance safety and security with rights and privacy.

Government Orders

The fact that this is being considered in an unusual way is a reflection of our deep commitment to open accountable, transparent, and, above all, consultative government. I certainly hope this will go to second reading, and then of course it will return to the House for debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given that my Liberal colleague says that people had misgivings about Bill C-51, I would like to know why the Liberal Party voted for it at the time.

As for torture, if the Liberals are against it, why did they not change the directive so that information that may have been extracted through overseas torture would no longer be accepted?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be reminded of the reason why many of us put our names forward in the last election, and that was to stand up for Canadians. Certainly, Bill C-51 was a big part of that. I did not vote for that. It is a priority for our government. I am very much in support of Bill C-59.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us, Bill C-59, is a huge piece of legislation. It goes far beyond the Liberal campaign promise to unwisely roll back a number of elements of Bill C-51, a bill that the Liberals supported when they were the third party in the House. I will say more about that in a moment. Bill C-59 is a multi-faceted attempt at the largest, broadest, and deepest redrawing, remodelling, overhauling, and consolidation—call it what they may—of Canada's national security laws in three and a half decades. It is, by any definition and any measure, an omnibus bill. Bill C-59 would create three new acts and would make significant changes to five existing acts. As my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil noted, the official opposition reserves the right to comment after the Speaker's decision on the NDP motion to separate.

In its complexity, Bill C-59 can only be described as an imperfect bill. There are good elements, which we in the official opposition support, but other elements that we strongly oppose. Similarly, Bill C-59 has been characterized by experts, at least by lawyers, academics, and others who have long studied and opined on national security issues, in a variety of ways, that it would resolve some problems and would ignore others. It would create some entirely new ones. Its elements are a combination of roses and thorns, and a firmly held criticism by the official opposition that two sections would actually weaken Canada's national security agencies and their ability to keep Canadians safe. The current Liberal government would make it more difficult for law enforcement and security agencies to prevent terrorist attacks on Canadian soil. Instead of combatting radicalization and cracking down on those who promote terrorism, Bill C-59 would create loopholes that advocates of terrorism could easily exploit.

With regard to the details, part one of Bill C-59 would create what is described as the centrepiece of the legislation, what others more colloquially describe as a super intelligence agency. It would be called the national security and intelligence review agency. Under its acronym, NSIRA, it would be assigned to review and report on the lawfulness of all national security and intelligence agencies across government. It would investigate complaints against the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, known by its acronym CSIS,

complaints against the Communications Security Establishment, CSE, and complaints against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. NSIRA would be intended, the Liberals tell us, to work with the new committee of Parliament, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. The new agency, like the parliamentary committee, would report annually to the Prime Minister. This last point, for me, is another point of concern. On this side of the House, we would have preferred to have had these reports made directly to the Houses of Parliament rather than being filtered through the Prime Minister's Office.

Part 2 of Bill C-59 would establish what is described as an independent, quasi-judicial intelligence commissioner, who would assess and review ministerial decisions regarding intelligence gathering and cybersecurity activities. Our concerns here flow from the procrastination and delays by the Liberals, more directly by the Prime Minister's Office, to fill vacancies across a range of close to a dozen existing commissioner positions, the last time I looked. These are delays that have more to do with the PMO's misguided intent to socially engineer with partisan overtones these arm's-length positions rather than to appoint by talent and qualifications.

Moving on, parts 3 and 4 of the bill are said to respond to concerns about charter consistency of the mandates and the powers of CSE and CSIS. However, part 4 would strip an important element of Bill C-51, passed by our previous Conservative government in 2015, an element that gave CSIS new authority to disrupt terrorist threats. The Liberals supported Bill C-51 in 2015, though they vaguely committed to roll back what they called problematic parts. They certainly have, caving in now in Bill C-59, to seriously restricting the ability of CSIS to conduct disruption actions to certain specific actions, and only unless and until officers and operatives follow a burdensome process to obtain a judicial warrant ahead of time.

● (1655)

This list would include many of the routine elements of undercover intelligence work, such as impersonating a criminal; fabricating documents, for example, to support such a character impersonation; or misdirecting an identified threat individual to a meeting with co-conspirators. Forcing judicial warrant conditions into suspect terror or intelligence investigations imposes serious new burdens on law enforcement and could very well compromise time-critical efforts to thwart terrorist attacks.

Government Orders

Part 5 of the proposed act is an important part that commits to clarifying disclosure and accountability provisions in the newly renamed security of Canada information disclosure act. This should see the end of departmental and agency intelligence silos, and a more effective sharing of information that is critical to threats to national security. We will see.

Part 6 attempts to bring greater coherence to the no-fly list, where children and adults get red-flagged as false positives because of names shared with threat-identified individuals. However, these improvements are very slight and imperfect. Thousands of Canadian families are still stuck in limbo because their names appear, or the name of a family member appears, on the no-fly list.

Part 7 is another section which we firmly believe seriously weakens public safety by minimizing certain terrorist activities. It removes the advocacy and promotion of terror as a criminal offence. It replaces it with what is characterized as a more targeted general counselling offence for terrorism offences, whether or not a specific terrorism offence is committed or a specific terrorism offence is counselled. As well, part 7 would make it harder for police to preemptively detain people without a criminal charge.

The power of making preventive arrests, a sometimes life-and-death tool for officers and operatives, is now limited to situations where such an arrest would be necessary to prevent terrorist activity. Under our previous Bill C-51, the threshold was that such an arrest would be likely to prevent terrorist activity.

The Conservative Party has always taken very seriously the safety of Canadians, as threats to this country's security have evolved and deepened in this age of international terror. We recognize the importance of updating our national security infrastructure and practices. We support the preamble of Bill C-59 as a worthy rationale to reducing the ability of courts to strike down convictions on improperly applied charter grounds.

We also strongly oppose, and I cannot say this too often, parts 4 and 7 as an unacceptable weakening of public safety, and the watering down of provisions in Bill C-51 that helped law enforcement officers and agencies to keep Canadians safe.

In conclusion, Bill C-59 is a complex bill, and it is certainly, by any measure, an omnibus bill. It would create three new acts, and it would make changes to five other existing acts.

As I said earlier, we in the official opposition reserve comment on your ruling, Mr. Speaker, in the fullness of time, and we hope it is a relatively short period of time, to make a decision on the NDP motion to separate.

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague across the way would recognize, or at the very least would acknowledge, that when we dealt with Bill C-51, a significant amount of concern was shown by Canadians. When we were in opposition, we pointed out to the government that there were certain areas that needed to be addressed. What we have before us today is, in good part, a response to some of those issues that were raised when we passed Bill C-51. The present Prime Minister made some commitments to Canadians leading up to the last federal election, and this legislation deals with some of those commitments.

Why does the Conservative Party not recognize that what we are witnessing today with respect to this legislation, which hopefully will go to committee at the end of the day, is the fulfillment of some significant commitments made by the Prime Minister during the last election. We then incorporated additional aspects into the legislation to deal with the concerns related to independent rights and freedoms, while dealing with the issue of security at the same time. Would the member not agree that we can do both at the same time?

• (1705)

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for attempting to put the government spin on the treatment of Bill C-51 and what it considers to be reasonable changes, which we, as I said, feel weaken crime-fighting and intelligence agencies in protecting national security. At the same time, we would have preferred to see the changes to Bill C-51 in stand-alone legislation, not folded into or buried in this omnibus bill, which creates three new agencies, changes a number of other acts, and across the board has some serious issues that we in the official opposition simply cannot support. There are good elements. The preamble to the act does lay out very clearly some protections against a judicial finding of error with respect to decisions by security agencies. However, we consider it to be a deeply flawed bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate concerns about omnibus bills. However, I recall very clearly in the 41st Parliament when we received Bill C-51, getting it on a Friday, taking it home to my riding, reading it with increasing levels of panic and concern throughout the weekend, and being the first member of Parliament to oppose it in this place.

Therefore, putting aside for the moment that we know we disagree on Bill C-51, I ask my hon. colleague if it was not also an omnibus bill. It had five parts. Each part of Bill C-51 dealt with a different aspect of security. Part 1, with respect to information sharing, was unfortunately not about information sharing where we need it, which is between and among security agencies, but sharing information with others about Canadians. Part 2 dealt with aspects of the no-fly list. Part 3 was about this bizarre, undefined notion that we could ban the promotion of "terrorism" in general. Part 4 was the massively expanded powers for CSIS. Part 5 amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Within each of those five parts, numerous acts were amended and changed. I would have preferred to see Bill C-51 split up into the five parts that were presented to us as one bill, but I do not recall my hon. colleague agreeing that it should have been split up. Where does he see the difference between this omnibus bill and Bill C-51, that omnibus bill in the 41st Parliament?

Government Orders

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, while I thank my colleague for her question, I think it should more appropriately be asked to the current Liberal government. This Parliament is not debating nor considering Bill C-51, which was passed with the enthusiastic support of the Liberal Party when it was the third party. The Liberals, en masse, as the third party, stood in support of Bill C-51. I would suggest to my hon. colleague that she should more appropriately question the shortcomings of this act, not look back to past Parliaments.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one cannot help but look to the past to see how we got here today with this bill, Bill C-59, because it really comes from the framework of Bill C-51. It is one of the reasons New Democrats will be opposing this bill, just as we opposed Bill C-51. At least we had an honest debate with the Conservatives about our position on Bill C-51, whereas the Liberals said they had concerns but then voted for Bill C-51, then later ran on a platform to get rid of Bill C-51.

Now we are stuck with Bill C-59. Their objective is clearly to muddy the waters so much that nobody will be able to follow this outside of the House of Commons, aside from experts in security intelligence. People are having to follow House of Commons debates on a regular basis, which is very difficult to do when there are so many things happening.

There still is interest out there. The bottom line is whether the privacy of Canadians will become unhinged by national security issues that undermine our civil liberties. When I look at some of the perspectives of Conservative members on civil liberties, I am, quite frankly, surprised that in this case, with Bill C-59, they do not have more backbone to raise issues about that balance, especially given the fact that one of their members, who very much has a strong civil libertarian background, nearly became leader of their party.

I can say this much about Bill C-51. Civil liberties and privacy are essential for a modern and functioning democracy. One of the continuing concerns with Bill C-59 is the assembly and distribution of personal data. It is real. There are people, such as Maher Arar and others, whose lives have been turned upside down because their personal information was used in a way that exposed them, their families, their business and personal contacts, and the people in their lives. It was an organized decision by our government agencies, the RCMP and CSIS, to exchange information with foreign powers related to that personal, private information. As Bill C-59 goes to committee, the Privacy Commissioner has expressed those concerns.

There are several cases in Canadian history where this has been germane to the concern people have about their privacy. I would argue that it has become even more difficult for individuals because of the use of electronic information for everything from taxes, to banking, to social exchanges, to employment. It is not as if this information is captured and stored in a vault somewhere that has very little exposure to third parties. The reality is that there are breaches. Other governments are actively attempting to break through Canadian databases on a regular basis, even countries we supposedly have decent relationships with in terms of trade, commerce, and discourse. There are attempts to abuse Canadian privacy.

●(1710)

Numerous mistakes have been made, over decades, when Canadians' personal information has been released by accident. I point to one of the more interesting cases we have been successful in. It showed the malaise in government. It was when the Paul Martin administration of the Liberals outsourced data collection for our census to Lockheed Martin through a public-private partnership. Basically, the Canadian census data collection component was outsourced to an arms manufacturer, which was compiling our data at public expense, because we were paying for it. When we did the investigation, we found that the information was going to be compiled in the United States. That would have made that information susceptible to the USA Patriot Act, back in 2004 or 2006. That would have exposed all our Canadian data, if it was going to be leaving the country.

Thankfully, a lot of Canadians spoke out against that. First, they had personal issues related to an arms manufacturing company collecting their personal information, especially when that company was producing the Hellfire missile and landmine munitions, when Canada had signed international agreements on restricting the distribution of those things. They also felt that the privacy component became a practical element with it moving out of the country. Thankfully, that stopped, and we amended it at that time.

The Government of Canada had to pay more money to assemble that data and information in Canada, so it cost us more. What the Liberals were trying to do was export the jobs, ironically, outside the country. The vulnerability of the Canadian data we were paying for was out of the country, then we had to pay a premium to bring it back and keep it in the country. That practice has ceased. We recently had the innovation committee confirm that, when the census committee came before us.

With Bill C-59, I still have grave concerns about the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act. It appears that most of the changes are going to be cosmetic. The Privacy Commissioner has alluded to that as well. When CSIS and other government agencies have that information, when is it scrubbed when it is provided? When is it no longer used? When is it no longer stored? When can it potentially be exposed by accident or for a reason?

Bill C-59 would put several laws in place. I want to note that there was extensive public consultation on it. The reality is that Bill C-51 was criticized by civil liberty advocates in "Our Security, Our Rights: National Security Green Paper, 2016". The public feedback we had from that review was related to people's personal privacy and how it would be used.

I want to make sure we are clear that this is not a mythological issue. It has actually been noted. On November 26, the Federal Court issued a ruling on CSIS bulk data collection. The electronic data of people over a 10-year period was clearly something that concerned Canadians.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, we have not come to the realization that Bill C-51 was a flawed bill from the get-go. It was not a bill New Democrats could support, and Bill C-59 would just put a mask over that bill.

• (1715)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank and commend the hon. member for Windsor West for his thoughtful speech. I certainly thank the New Democratic Party caucus for joining me in the 41st Parliament in opposing Bill C-51.

I think there have been substantial improvements made in Bill C-59. I think we would all agree with that, but I remain very concerned that the powers are overreaching for CSIS agents to seek a court order from a single judge that would allow a warrant for a constitutional breach. I have raised this in briefings we have had with officials. Officials claim that the language in Bill C-59 would mean that they could not get a warrant that violated the Constitution and the charter, but the language in the bill itself appears to negate that proposition. It appears that it would still allow CSIS agents to receive a warrant that would allow them to violate our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I know that I am diving into the details of the bill, but it would take a lot of study. Many sections are very much improved, and the government deserves commendation for those sections, but these are the ones that chill me to the bone in terms of how our democracy functions and whether we allow security agents to obtain a warrant to violate our Constitution.

I wonder if my friend for Windsor West has any comments.

• (1720)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is getting into some of the details, but I think the details are very important. When we start to look at the practical applications of those details and how it affects people's lives, it is a very pertinent and important question and very much germane to what I am concerned about with regard to personal privacy.

The member is absolutely correct with regard to the language. There is a contradiction there, which can become a discretionary call. We saw this before with the Maher Arar case and then other cases. If there are no clear, explicit rules for understanding how to move on an actual item of information or an individual, it can create immense complications for them. I know for a fact that when CSIS agents have decided, for whatever reason, and sometimes they are good reasons, I am assuming, to interview or intervene with a family in Canada, it is almost impossible to do so without the community knowing in one way or another. Even the most innocent elements can have a disastrous effect on a family and the perception of that family in the community. This is one of the reasons we cannot have these grey areas or contradictions that are in the legislation right now.

I come from a community of 200,000 in the general Windsor area. The greater Windsor area is larger than that. I can tell members that if there is some type of engagement with a family by CSIS, it gets beyond the personal boundaries, which can be quite complicated. Fishing expeditions, if they become that way, can have traumatic repercussions for families, including their children.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Windsor West for his speech.

I share many of his worries and concerns. For instance, in November 2016, the Federal Court issued a rather scathing decision on the fact that for 10 years, CSIS had been storing thousands of pieces of personal information on average, ordinary Canadians who were not even likely to be investigated and who posed no threat. The Liberal government decided not to appeal the Federal Court ruling. However, in Bill C-59, the Liberals are making legal what was ruled illegal by the Federal Court, namely storing personal information for very long periods of time on people who are not being investigated and who pose no threat to national security.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, we have to ask what the repercussions of all these breaches are.

Our men and women who are serving Canada so well in our intelligence agency and our law enforcement agencies need specific, clear rules, which cannot be reinterpreted, to do their jobs with such sensitive casework and files. I am concerned that Bill C-59 would not provide that framework and could undermine, quite frankly, what is necessary, which is confidence for them to be able to do their jobs, integrity with regard to privacy, and repercussions if there is a problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to speak to Bill C-59, which deals with matters of national security. As we have heard in the speeches from the start, this is a rather imposing bill of 140 pages and nine chapters. It was introduced in June, and we recently learned from the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness that the government was going to do something somewhat unusual, namely to refer the bill to committee before second reading stage.

We have been treated to a host of reasons as to why. We are told that this would allow hon. members more flexibility to amend the bill. Before we get into the essence of the bill, let us just talk about the Liberal government's approach to amending legislation that has an impact on people's daily lives. I know that my colleagues across the way will be very interested to hear this. Since this bill has to do with national security, we can expect that everyone here agrees that it has an impact on the daily lives of all Canadians and that it is very important for them.

Government Orders

Let me make one thing perfectly clear: I would never suggest anyone in the House wants to do anything less than keep Canadians absolutely safe. We are all here to represent our constituents and our country, and we all certainly want what is best for our country. However, the government seems to be having some problems with the process and with governance. We have seen evidence of that in several cases, such as the electoral reform file, on which the government held coast-to-coast-to-coast consultations.

An hon. member: To coast.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are coasts everywhere. The government held endless consultations and created a website where people could find out what kind of voters, what kind of citizens they are. That website became something of a laughingstock across the country. Obviously the government proceeded without a real plan on that file.

In short, with regard to electoral reform, the government stood firm until, one day, the Prime Minister decided that everyone's opinions had been heard and that he was going to forget about electoral reform because the findings showed that it would not benefit the Liberals. That was all it took for the Liberals to decide not to move forward with electoral reform.

Let us now look at tax reform. In the middle of the summer, this government announced major changes in a notice that was sent to all Canadian taxpayers. In it, the Liberals announced changes to the tax rules. They figured that, if everything went well, those changes would be implemented in the fall without anyone even realizing it. However, Canadians saw what the Liberals were doing. Farmers and small business owners saw that the proposed changes were major ones that could have a significant impact on their finances and the survival of their companies, and so, of course, they protested. Given the public outcry, the government finally decided to back down. It decided to make small changes and to do away with the most damaging aspects of the reform.

If entrepreneurs, farmers, and producers had not spoken out, the bill would not have changed. The worst part was that the government was proud to announce that it would not hurt them, while the Liberals were the only ones who said it would hurt them. This just shows once again that they are improvising. This government is incapable of introducing legislation that is sound from the start, incapable of consulting Canadians properly, and incapable of listening to the members of the House to come up with a good bill or good regulations.

That is to say nothing of all the government's attempts over the past two years to change how the House operates. Everyone has heard about the Leader of the Government's famous discussion paper that proposed a new way of doing things here in the House.

• (1725)

Again, the government comes out with a paper. We all remember the infamous document from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons who proposed a new way of doing things here in the House. That paper led to a discussion, but under a specific time frame and very specific rules. If we did not fall in line, the discussion would end. That is what the Leader of the Government in

the House of Commons discussion paper plan looked like. Again, there was an outcry.

Everyone realized that the paper was worthless. The government had to back down again. Finally, minor changes were made to what the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons had proposed and as a result, this huge omnibus bill might be split into several parts depending on the Speaker's ruling. This illustrates once again that this government is incapable of taking a file, introducing it, and having it passed in accordance with the proper rules, which is the government's role.

As I said earlier, Bill C-59 is an omnibus bill. It is 140 pages long and has nine parts. It is a very large bill. Now, we get another surprise: the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness tells us that this bill will not be read at second reading because the Liberals are not too sure about what they are introducing. They are not sure that what they introduced is good. They want to send it to committee right away. This way, people can find the errors before we adopt the principle of a bill that someone might disagree with or that everyone might like. Since the government is not sure, it wants to do things differently and seek input one more time.

Perhaps there may not yet have been consultations on Bill C-59, but the government did hold consultations on the national security framework. This consultation touched on many elements in Bill C-59. It heard from 138 witnesses and 39 submissions were made. It was another coast-to-coast-to-coast consultation. Today, the government is telling us that it has not consulted enough, that it is introducing a less-than-perfect bill, and that it wants to refer it to a committee before passing the bill in principle in the House. Where is the logic in that?

The Liberals were elected to form government. Unfortunately, after two years, the Liberals are incapable of acting as a government. They are incapable of governing. They are unable to govern when it counts, and when Canadians, farmers, small businesses, and even the functioning of the House are affected, and they are unable to serve as a government and to make the right decisions for all Canadians.

I am puzzled about how the government is proceeding on Bill C-59. What is the government's problem? By overdoing consultations and wanting to please everyone, the government is pleasing no one and cannot put together a viable bill.

Before I conclude, I want to come back to Bill C-59. This is a major bill. The previous government passed Bill C-51 to address the threat of terrorism. I have in my hands a list of every terrorist attack that has occurred worldwide since 2010. The information comes from Wikipedia, an occasionally reliable source. I compiled a list of the attacks. In 2017 alone, there have been 105 terrorist attacks worldwide. I calculated that in 2017 alone, terrorist attacks have claimed 2,236 lives. Attacks in 2017 account for just three pages of this massive compilation of terrorist attacks worldwide.

Government Orders

I do not want to list off all of these attacks. It makes for rather sombre reading, but what it clearly shows is that year after year, the number of attacks is not going down. It is going up. It is absolutely essential that the government take all necessary steps to protect Canadians from this wave of terrorist attacks, which affects not only Canada, but every country in the world. Unfortunately, this wave shows no signs of subsiding.

• (1730)

We are going to study Bill C-59. We are going to see how the Speaker rules on whether the bill should be divided into several versions for voting. We reserve comment on whether we will support the bill or not.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his thoughts on this issue. As my colleague rightly pointed out, it is unbelievable that the Liberal government is making things up as it goes along. It had two years to fix what I will call the infamous Bill C-51.

My colleague will agree that the government seems to be making things up as it goes along. Normally, we would debate the principles of the bill at second reading. However, the current Liberal government says that the bill is so bad that we will not even debate it at second reading. The government wants to send it directly to committee to make amendments, since the government did not do a good job. Then, the bill will return to the House of Commons.

Does my colleague agree that if the bill is so flawed, the government should withdraw it, throw it away, and work with the opposition to draft something reasonable?

• (1735)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I agree in part with what my colleague said, especially regarding Bill C-51. I would remind members that the Liberals were the second opposition party at the time. They supported Bill C-51. Today, they are trying to come up with a new version of Bill C-51, because they made promises in order to try to win votes. However, they are coming to the realization that Bill C-51 was not that bad after all. That is what is happening. That is why they are referring Bill C-59 to committee and trying all sorts of tricks to perhaps revert to Bill C-51, which was quite a good bill that guaranteed one thing that we all agree on: the security of Canadians against this wave of terrorists attacks around the world.

The Liberals supported Bill C-51 at the time. Today, they realize that they cannot do better. They are trying all kinds of tricks to revert to Bill C-51 without making it seem that way.

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservative government brought in Bill C-51, it was designed to assist law enforcement and security agencies to prevent attacks on Canada's soil.

Does the hon. member feel that Bill C-59 would distract from that?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. There are two parts in Bill C-59 that are rather problematic. I am talking about Part 4 and Part 7 that can effectively cause serious

problems. It seems that the Liberal government is making it more difficult for law enforcement to prevent attacks on Canadian soil.

When there is knowledge of a possible attack, terrorist organizations are not going to do everything they can to get arrested. They are doing to do everything they can to stay under the radar, to make it difficult to be detected. At first blush, unfortunately it seems that Bill C-59 as currently worded will make things easier for terrorist organizations and make it more difficult for law enforcement to prevent this type of attack.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thinking back to the 2015 general federal election, there were certainly few issues as contentious as Bill C-51, the so-called Anti-Terrorism Act. In my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, citizens came out en masse to protest in many communities, including Invermere, Revelstoke, Nelson, and in my home town of Cranbrook. I attended some of those rallies and found that the opposition cut across partisan and generational lines.

As I said at the time, the more people knew about Bill C-51, the more they disliked it. Letting Canadians know the details of the bill was not part of the former government's playbook. I remember my predecessor inviting the Attorney General to the riding. He was one of the co-authors of the bill, but rather than invite members of the public to ask questions or provide input, they held some private meetings and then left. Not even the local media were allowed to speak to the Attorney General at the time.

This is the kind of anti-democratic behaviour that helped Canadians decide to retire the Conservative government and elect a new one. Why did Canadians and the people in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia hate and fear the Anti-Terrorism Act so much? It was because it potentially criminalized activities like peaceful protests and picket lines, by giving police broad powers to breach Canadians' privacy. Many of my constituents believed it was clearly aimed not at terrorists, but at stopping democratic resistance to the Conservatives' priority projects such as pipelines. It helped to end 21 years of Conservative MPs in my riding in the corner of British Columbia.

The Liberal Party, which fully supported Bill C-51 when it was being debated and voted on, promised during the election to do better. The Liberals said they would repeal the worst parts of the bill. Here we are two years after the election and the government is just now getting around to addressing that terrible piece of legislation. Its response is insufficient.

Government Orders

The new legislation, Bill C-59, still allows the widespread sharing of Canadians' personal information on a national security list. It maintains a very broad definition of activities that the government claims will undermine the security of Canada, an issue that the Privacy Commissioner has flagged, and it does not ensure real-time oversight of the bulk collection of Canadians' private data.

What is worse is that the government is dealing with this legislation in an entirely undemocratic fashion, forcing the bill to committee, without second reading debate.

Despite their support for Bill C-51, the Liberals were elected on a promise to fix this terrible legislation. So far, they have fallen far short of doing so.

This goes on the lengthening list of broken promises. Let us look at the bill in detail.

In November 2016, the Federal Court issued a ruling on CSIS bulk data collection. CSIS illegally kept potentially revealing electronic data about people over a 10-year period. In a hard-hitting ruling, Justice Simon Noel said that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service breached its duty to inform the court of its data collection program, since the information was gathered using judicial warrants. CSIS should not have retained the information since it was not directly related to threats to the security of Canada.

Bill C-59 responds to the Federal Court ruling in the most concerning way for our privacy, enshrining bulk collection by CSIS of metadata containing private information of Canadians not relevant to investigations. That is right: rather than ordering CSIS to obey the law and stop storing Canadians' data illegally, the bill makes it legal for it to do so. The new bill does relatively little to roll back the extensive information-sharing powers Bill C-51 gave security agencies. The fact remains there is still too broad a definition as to what constitutes national security. The newly renamed security of Canada information disclosure act still permits departments to disclose far too much information in their pursuit of questionable security objectives.

Bill C-51 gave CSIS broad powers to reduce threats through conduct that threatens freedom of expression, public safety, and freedom of association, and it was ripe for abuse. The new legislation still provides CSIS with those powers, but limits them from including torture, detention, and serious destruction of property that would endanger a life.

● (1740)

It is good that the government would no longer have the right to torture its citizens, but the power CSIS maintains would be more appropriate to a totalitarian police state than to Canada. Bill C-59, like Bill C-51 before it, would make Canada a comfortable place for Big Brother.

The government will tell us that none of this is likely and that no powers would ever be abused, yet we already have examples where over-zealousness in the name of anti-terrorism has harmed Canadians. We have seen just this month taxpayers having to pay out settlements worth tens of millions of dollars to Canadians who were tortured overseas due to the complicit actions of the Canadian security services. We see hundreds of young children whose names are on the no-fly list, unable to accompany their families from one

city to another because they have been banned, and the government has been unable to find a mechanism to review and correct the list. Apparently, the government is considering a new computer system to manage the no-fly list. Let us hope it works better than the Phoenix payroll system has.

Bill C-59 will not undo the damage that Bill C-51 created. It is a Band-Aid for a gaping wound. With my NDP colleagues, I will be opposing the motion to ram Bill C-59 through the democratic process, and I will join the chorus of Canadians calling for Bill C-51 to be repealed, not just tinkered with. Let me close with a quotation from Daniel Therrien, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, when he spoke before the access to information, privacy and ethics committee a year ago, November 22, 2016. He said:

Do we want a country where the security service has a lot of information about most citizens with a view to detecting national security threats? Is that the country we want to live in?

We have seen real cases in which CSIS had in its bank of information the information about many people who did not represent a threat. Is that the country we want?

The answer from Canadians clearly is no. That is most certainly not a country we want, and we cannot and will not support Bill C-59.

● (1745)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia made some very specific points in reference to his riding. He spoke about the last election in 2015 and the demonstrations in his riding. I remember the demonstrations in my riding as well. In fact, there was one in particular that was right out in front of James Moore's previous riding in Port Moody. It was a very concerning issue and many people spoke out. Now we are here and at this point we are talking about an amended bill. I think the bill would allow continued widespread sharing of personal information of Canadians that is not strictly relevant to national security lists. I wonder if the member shares that view and feels that the people in his riding believe the bill would go far enough, or if it is what they were looking for in 2015.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, going back to 2015, it really was one of the most contentious issues that came forward during the election. People in my riding were concerned about too much unnecessary information being collected, and that the information and the act would be used to stop legal demonstrations. There was a great deal of concern about Bill C-51, which led to protests in a number of communities, not only in my riding but across Canada.

Government Orders

Constituents would like to see Bill C-51 completely withdrawn, not necessarily amended through Bill C-59 but repealed and, certainly, if not repealed entirely, then at least specific sections repealed that Canadians found to be most repugnant.

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POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING ORDER 69.1—BILL C-59—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I will ask the member to be patient for a moment while I provide a quick ruling on a point of order raised a bit earlier, and then there will be three minutes remaining in questions and comments. This will not take long.

[*Translation*]

I thank the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly for raising a point of order with regard to the application of Standing Order 69.1, a motion under Standing Order 73. As hon. members know, Standing Order 69.1 is new, but its wording is clear. As is often the case, the powers of the Speaker are limited in the Standing Orders and that is case with Standing Order 69.1.

I will read the section that I believe pertains in this case. The Standing Order says, “the Speaker shall have the power to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting, on the motion for second reading and reference to a committee and the motion for third reading and passage of the bill”.

● (1750)

[*English*]

The motion currently before the House, the one requested in the point of order, is not in fact a motion for second reading. Nor is it a motion of course at third reading to adopt the motion. It is instead a motion to refer the bill to committee forthwith.

As the Speaker, I am bound to apply the Standing Order as it is written, and Standing Order 69.1 is not written in a manner that allows me, as the Speaker, to apply it in a motion which is to refer the bill to committee before second reading. Therefore, I cannot, in my view, invoke Standing Order 69.1 in this case.

However, should the motion in fact be adopted to send the bill to committee before second reading and should the bill be concurred in at report stage and at second reading, I could certainly, as the Speaker, apply Standing Order 69.1 at third reading of the bill. At that time, one would anticipate that after it came back from committee, the bounds of the bill and its principles would be more clearly established.

As I mentioned a few days ago, in my previous ruling on a motion concerning Standing Order 69.1, at such time I would encourage members to bring forth their arguments about whether the bill should be divided for the purposes of voting as early as possible.

[*Translation*]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT, 2017

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my NDP colleague and his comments regarding Bill C-59. During question period today, we heard the government, under pressure, admit that over 60 former ISIS terrorists were in Canada and that they had returned from the conflict. Considering Bill C-59, is the member in favour of the approach of the government or what is that approach?

It has been acknowledged that there is a degree of risk that is presented by former ISIS terrorists now coming back into Canada. Sunny ways treatment, which is the Liberal way, will not solve the problem. What does his party think is the appropriate level of assessment and risk of abatement to deal with these high-risk individuals who return from ISIS?

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the important point with respect to the debate is whether Bill C-59 will actually contribute anything to the ISIS question and the number of people coming back into Canada. I really do not think it will. Bill C-51 and now Bill C-59 potentially create concerns for everyday Canadians about the security of information around them and how it gets used.

The government needs to figure out what to do with returning ISIS individuals and deal with them appropriately to ensure our safety. However, I do not think that is relevant to this bill. Bill C-59 would do nothing to help that situation one way or the other.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for sharing some very practical points about why we are opposing Bill C-59 as it is proposed today.

One of the things I want to talk about is this issue, which was also discussed by our colleague, about civic engagement, people who are active in their communities giving messages to government, to people like us who are in office. This overly broad definition of activity that undermines the security of Canada was flagged by the Privacy Commissioner. It makes good sense to me that we repeal this entirely and start from scratch, taking the important points that have merit and fleshing out legislation on that.

Could the member talk a little more about our concerns with the Privacy Commissioner and in exercising civil liberties?

● (1755)

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, it was one of the very serious concerns for my constituents, and Canadians in general, related to Bill C-51, that they felt the bill would be used to stop legal protests against government projects like pipelines.

We need to make sure that any legislation moving forward enshrines the right of Canadians for public protest without fear of being considered a terrorist.

Government Orders

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters. This is a very large bill that seeks to make some major changes to our national security. It affects Bill C-51 that was brought in by our previous government. It replaces the Security Intelligence Review Committee and the commissioner of the Communications Security Establishment with a new national security and intelligence review agency. It creates the position of an intelligence commissioner to provide day-to-day oversight of national security activities. It limits the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's ability to reduce terrorist threats. It limits the ability of government departments to share data among themselves to protect national security. It removes the offence of advocating and promoting terrorist offences in general. It raises the threshold for obtaining a terrorism peace bond and recognizance with conditions.

Obviously, there is a lot in this bill, and I will not have time to speak to all of it. Therefore, I will focus on a few key areas that I have concerns with.

As most people know, extremist travellers are those who have left Canada or other countries to join terrorist groups abroad. As ISIS continues to lose ground in Syria and Iraq, supporters of this militant group and other terrorist organizations have returned to their home countries, Canada included, with almost 60 of them now returned.

According to a recent report that was released in October from the Soufan Center, a U.S.-based non-profit organization, 33 countries have reported the arrival of at least 5,600 extremist travellers. That is 5,600 of them now returning home. The report states that those returns represent, "a huge challenge for security and law enforcement entities."

Now is not the time to relax the laws that protect our national security. Canadians are at risk. Canada is not immune to the threats of terrorism. We have seen an attack on Parliament Hill, the terrorist attack that killed Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, and the recent attack of a police officer and members of the public in the city of Edmonton, just next to my riding. We need strong legislation in place to protect our national security and our citizens. This is why our Conservative government introduced Bill C-51, which has been used to disrupt terrorist activities nearly two dozen times that we know of. This includes when law enforcement and intelligence officers intervened last year to stop ISIS supporter Aaron Driver, who had planned to commit a terror attack in Canada. These attacks, and attempted attacks, demonstrate that Canada needs strong security and intelligence legislation that enables public safety agencies to do their job.

Prior to our previous Conservative government's Bill C-51, the mandate of CSIS prevented it from engaging in any disruption activities. It could not approach the parents of a radicalized youth and encourage them to dissuade their child from travelling to a war zone or conducting attacks here in Canada. After Bill C-51, CSIS was able to engage in threat disruption. Warrants were not required for activities that were not contrary to Canadian law, such as approaching the parents of a radicalized youth. This was very reasonable, in my opinion. However, Bill C-59 will now limit the threat disruption activities of CSIS to very specific actions. It will require a warrant for simple and necessary activities, such as

impersonating a local citizen to give a suspect the wrong directions in order to disrupt a threat. This bill unnecessarily limits and restricts the ability of CSIS to disrupt threats to national security. Bill C-59 also makes it more difficult to obtain a peace bond for terrorism cases. We should be going forward. We should be strengthening the laws in Canada, not reducing them in favour of terrorism.

● (1800)

Under Bill C-51, a peace bond can be issued if there are reasonable grounds to fear that a person may commit a terrorism offence and a peace bond is likely to prevent terrorism activities. That is the same as a peace bond under the Criminal Code of Canada, which I applied for on a number of occasions over the years as a police officer. When I knew someone might pose a threat to an individual, I went to a judge and had a peace warrant issued to protect the possible victim.

Bill C-59 would increase the threshold from "is likely" to "is necessary" to prevent a terrorist activity. If we have evidence that someone is planning an attack and we cannot act on good sound information, it is going to be a sad day for this country. This means that the amount of evidence that would go into proving the peace bond is necessary is nearly the same as the evidence one would need to lay a criminal charge. If we look at those set of circumstances, why would one go for a peace bond? One might as well lay the criminal charge. It is a little late.

The point of peace bonds is that there is not enough evidence to arrest and charge that suspect, but there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is involved in terrorist activities. That is reasonable. It is reasonable under the Criminal Code to believe that if somebody threatens numerous times to kill a person, that maybe a peace bond should be issued for that person to stay away from the possible victim.

If the government raises the threshold to obtain a peace bond, people who are a risk to national security will slip through the cracks. We now have 60 of them in this country. How are our police forces supposed to keep us safe if they cannot request that special safety conditions be put on someone who is likely to engage in an attack?

Government Orders

I also find this legislation problematic in addressing the issue of advocating and recruiting for terrorist groups. General and broad threats against Canada or all infidels is not a crime under the Criminal Code. Hate speech and threats need to be directed at an identifiable group. Bill C-51's definition of advocating or promoting terrorism enabled law officers to more effectively pursue those distributing radicalizing propaganda and advocating violence, and it should. However, the bill before us today would delete this offence. Without the ability to target the advocacy and/or promotion of terrorism, law enforcement will be handicapped from effectively addressing the various ways that individuals are radicalized. This includes removing terrorist propaganda from the Internet.

Another concerning change is in part 8 of the bill, which would amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act. If we afford more protections to young offenders who are guilty of terrorism offences, youth will become a target for radical recruiters. Instead of cracking down on radicalization, the Liberals are creating loopholes that those who seek to radicalize youth can exploit.

One last problematic area that I want to highlight is in part 5 of the bill. This section would amend the Security of Canada Information Sharing Act, which was established by Bill C-51. The changes proposed in today's bill would make it more difficult for government departments to share information with each other. As a former police officer, I know how necessary it is to be able to share intelligence when conducting a large investigation. It can make or break a case. We have problems when it is easier for our own agencies to share information internationally than with each other. While our Five Eyes allies are all taking measures to strengthen national security, this legislation would remove the ability of our intelligence services to reduce terrorist threats.

In the last year, horrendous attacks in the United States, Europe, and our own country, have shown that no country is immune from the risks associated with terrorism and radicalization. The Anti-terrorism Act, brought forward by our previous government, struck a careful balance between protecting the civil liberties of Canadians while adequately providing law enforcement with the necessary tools to keep Canadians safe. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that all of Canada's security and intelligence services have the tools they need to do their jobs.

• (1805)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have on the one hand a group of individuals in our special operations forces who, if they have been injured by one of these terrorists, are facing a significant drop in remuneration if they do not fully recuperate within six months. Now we have a number of individuals, euphemistically called “foreign terrorist travellers”, whose number the government minimizes to about 60, but whom we know there are at least 180. That is discounting the mass migration of people across our borders without the full vetting that needed to be done.

My hon. colleague was a former police officer, as he referred to. I am wondering if he could quantify the cost of surveillance of just one individual, and then of 180 individuals at minimum, and maybe 1,800. How would that compare to the money being taken away from the soldiers and compare to the money being devoted to the

people the government is mollycoddling back into Canada, whom we were fighting against and bombing?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, the cost of keeping track of 180 individuals would be astronomical for the government. The money we are looking at to protect our soldiers who return with injuries would be just a small portion of what it would cost for the government to keep track of 60, 100, or 180 people.

We need to keep track of these individuals. They are now mentally prepared as terrorists, and they are coming back into this country. Do members think they can switch off like that? It is impossible. They are going to react and will follow through on what they have been trained to do in the last three or four years, or however many years they have been fighting with ISIS. It is no different than taking a police officer who worked undercover with a motorcycle gang. He cannot just switch back; it takes deprogramming. It sometimes takes two to three years. This is exactly what we need to be concerned about: the safety of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague and I do not agree on Bill C-59, not on the very essence of the bill, nor on Bill C-51. Bill C-59 was supposed to correct Bill C-51. As my colleague knows, I voted against Bill C-51.

Despite the fact that the Liberals have been working on this for two years now, they have introduced a bill that is full of flaws. Everyone realized that immediately. It must be sent to committee right away, because we cannot even debate this bill at second reading.

With all that being said, would my colleague not agree that this reeks of improvisation on the Liberal's part once again, and that if they were not ready to introduce Bill C-59, they should withdraw it and work on it with the opposition for once, so that we can come up with a more balanced and better prepared solution?

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Bill C-59 is full of flaws. As the Liberals stated earlier today in one of their statements, it is the result of an election promise by them. I do not think there is any room or place in Canada's security to be worrying about an election promise versus the security of Canadians. I believe the bill should have gone back for a lot more debate. The bill should never have been presented in the format it has been. It is wrong in many cases, and it is hurting a very good bill, Bill C-51, which may have had possible flaws, but not very many, and things could be reviewed and corrected.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that the NDP opposes the motion to refer Bill C-59 to committee before second reading.

Government Orders

Bill C-59 makes a lot of changes, but it does not chart a bold new course for Canada and make civil liberties and human rights central to Canadian security laws. The Liberals waited almost two years to hold a public consultation, promising to correct Bill C-51. They heard countless testimonies and received briefs from experts, and yet they failed to deliver.

Sadly, Bill C-59 does not seek to correct Bill C-51. The NDP opposed Bill C-51 from the outset back in 2015. Now we are faced with legislation that violates civil liberties and privacy rights, and Bill C-59 follows the dangerous path trodden by the Harper government.

The new, limited review and oversight mechanism set out in this bill does not make up for the disclosure of information and the almost limitless power given to our security agencies. The document that came out of the consultations, entitled “Our Security, Our Rights: National Security Green Paper, 2016”, was criticized by civil liberties advocates for being biased. It placed an inordinate amount of weight on safety and security at the expense of protecting Canadians' constitutional values.

The scenarios presented in this document seemed to favour the implementation of the most controversial provisions of Bill C-51. Although the green paper did not provide a balanced view that would allow Canadians to properly assess the potential negative impacts that giving the government too much power could have on individual rights and freedoms, the results of the consultations showed that Canadians still wanted Bill C-51 to be completely repealed and that they would not be satisfied with half measures.

The NDP has consistently called on the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to repeal and replace the 2010 ministerial directive on torture to make sure Canada abides by the total ban on torture, and more specifically to forbid the use, under any circumstances, of information that other countries may have obtained through torture and the sharing of information that could lead to torture.

Canada must not forget the shameful part it played in the torture of Canadian citizens like Maher Arar. Even though the directive was not part of Bill C-51, it is a deplorable component of our national security framework and should have been addressed during the Liberals' study of the framework. Unfortunately, the new directive issued in October 2017 does not forbid the RCMP, CSIS, or CBSA from using information that may have been obtained through torture in other countries.

The new instructions are nothing more than semantic changes, since they authorize the use of information obtained by torture in certain cases, with a very low accountability threshold. This does nothing for public safety and security, since information obtained through torture is not reliable. The new directive, just like the old one, tarnishes Canada's reputation and goes against Canadian values.

Furthermore, if the bill passes, Canada will remain a police state, and Bill C-59 will even make things worse in some specific circumstances.

• (1815)

It will allow the Communications Security Establishment to launch cyberattacks against foreign targets.

The agents involved will thus become terrorists in the eyes of those countries. Ordinary citizens of those countries will have no other means than their own of protecting themselves from potential injustices caused by Canadian secret agents.

This new bill has very few measures that will reduce the broader powers granted to security agencies involved in information sharing under Bill C-51. The fact remains that the definition of national security is still too broad. The legislation still allows departments to share far too much information in their quest to achieve rather questionable security objectives. However, despite the fact that a government has taken steps to create more solid frameworks for the Canada Information Sharing Act and the Secure Air Travel Act, the no-fly list, the concerns raised by the introduction of C-51 remain unaddressed.

The government has not yet demonstrated why this intrusive bill is necessary. I am also concerned about the fact that Bill C-59 seems to create a legal framework that allows CSIS to keep data about citizens that used to be off limits and that there is no reasonable justification for expanding these powers. It also allows CSIS to keep its controversial disruption powers.

I will now turn to other elements of the bill that I have a problem with. Bill C-59 amends the definition of “activity that undermines the security of Canada” to include any activity that threatens the lives or the security of people in Canada or of any individual who has a connection to Canada and who is outside Canada. The definition includes activities that cause “significant or widespread interference with critical infrastructure”. We are concerned that this could be used against peaceful demonstrators protesting things like pipelines.

CSIS will maintain its threat-reduction powers. Bill C-59 just adds torture, detention, and serious damage to property that endangers the life of an individual to the list of things CSIS cannot do when disrupting a terrorist plot. CSIS must also check with other departments and organizations to see if they have other ways to reduce threats.

CSIS can prevent a person from travelling but cannot detain anyone. There is no clear distinction between the two, which creates dangerous legal uncertainty. The bill does not prevent CSIS from collecting related data from Canadians who are not considered a threat.

Finally, the bill fails to address two worrisome aspects of Canadian national security laws, namely security certificates and the ministerial directives on torture, which must be done away with.

Government Orders

In summary, the Liberals were elected on a promise to repeal the problematic provisions of Bill C-51, and they made us wait two years. Their current proposal does not even come close to solving the problems created by the former government's Bill C-51 regarding the violation of Canadians' privacy and the criminalization of dissent. What is more, the Liberal government is using this omnibus bill to create a legal framework that would allow CSIS to store sensitive metadata on completely innocent Canadians, a practice that the Federal Court deemed to be illegal last fall.

● (1820)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague, the member for Jonquière, for her speech.

I know the NDP members have quite a different vision from that of the Conservatives. I would like to know what she thinks of the fact that, under Bill C-59, a CSIS agent on a secret mission in the field will be barred from intervening even if he or she thinks someone may be considering or preparing to commit an attack.

How can my colleague explain that?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am not an expert on security or intelligence. My old career was more about delivering information. I would rather answer his question by going over the issue of information gathering. What kind of information will they gather, and what do they do with it?

In my speech, I talked about the ministerial directives on torture. The NDP has consistently called on the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to repeal and replace the 2010 ministerial directive on torture to make sure Canada abides by the total ban on torture, and more specifically to forbid the use, under any circumstances, of information that other countries may have obtained through torture and the sharing of information that could lead to torture.

[*English*]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her comments on how important it is for us to have responsible legislation that moves forward in the best interests of Canadians' civil liberties and their security.

As we know, we are asking for a piece-by-piece repeal of Bill C-51. We have pointed out that there are certain measures the Liberals would like to keep. We would invite them to make their case and work with us to defend the rights of Canadians.

Having said that and in light of the earlier question, does the member think it is important for us to be concerned with new legislation in ensuring transparency and real-time oversight?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Earlier my colleague from Beloeil—Chambly suggested splitting up Bill C-59, so that we could study each act and vote on each of them separately. We do support some of the provisions of the bill,

but there are others that we oppose because they are no different than the provisions of Bill C-51.

I hope this comes back to the House so that we can debate it again, split the bill up, and study each bill separately to voice an opinion. I also hope we have a viable bill, because in its current form, Bill C-59 does not at all meet our expectations. On top of that, it is no different than Bill C-51.

As one of my colleagues said earlier in his speech, this appears to be improvised, and a lot of information seems to be missing.

To answer my colleague's question, it would be great if we could split the bill up, debate it, and have separate votes.

● (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I have a shortened time today. I know my friend from Winnipeg North in particular was looking forward to hearing the fulness of my remarks, but he will have to wait.

This is an important bill and an important time to be discussing it. The issue of security and terrorism is very much on the minds of Canadians, in particular in the context where we know that people from Canada have gone to fight for organizations whose values and objectives are totally at odds with those of Canadians. Now some of them may be coming back.

We heard very weak answers from the government to real and legitimate security concerns put forward by the opposition. We in the official opposition take the view that the first job of any government is to keep its citizens safe. In the Canadian context, Canadians expect the government to have their safety and security top of mind, yet we have not heard a response at all to legitimate and serious questions we have presented on that subject.

Bill C-59 seeks to repeal and change portions of the previous Bill C-51. The government's response to the bill in the previous Parliament was anything but clear or consistent. We in the Conservative caucus, then in government, now in the official opposition, took a principled approach to give our security agencies reasonable powers, subject to oversight, in order to keep Canadians safe and to disrupt and stop terrorist activity. That was the Conservative position.

The New Democrats took a different position. They opposed the bill. They were consistent in that. We were consistent in our position.

Private Members' Business

The Liberals though were trying, as they often do, to see which way the wind was blowing on this. At first, they said they were going to fully support the legislation. Then, as the public debate progressed, they continued to say they supported the legislation, but kept modifying the context of that support. Eventually, their justification for supporting it was that they did not want people accusing them of not supporting the bill. Then they said not to worry, they would repeal the problematic aspects of it from their perspective. However, they still voted for the previous legislation and were anything but clear about what they would change.

Now we are a couple of years into the Liberals' mandate as they try to figure out what they actually had a problem with. They wanted to be in between on the issue but could not figure out where they were going. That was the reality of the government's position. Now, finally, they have brought us legislation that makes some changes. Now they want to have it proceed to committee for study before it is even voted on in the House at second reading. It is interesting they have put forward a bill but are already putting it in a direction that allows them to make very substantial amendments to it.

We see this continuing lack of direction and general indecisiveness on security matters from the Liberal government. The Liberals, it seems, still do not really know where they actually stand and where they want to go when it comes to the particular provisions of the bill. The Prime Minister and the minister who moved the bill both voted in favour of the original Bill C-51.

As we look at the bill, which makes changes in a variety of different areas, we are concerned about some of the provisions because it shows the government does not properly take the need to defend the security of Canadians and the need to have provisions in place enabling the protection of that security at the level with which it should be dealt.

A number of provisions jump out at me. For instance, in part 5 with respect to information sharing, we see them undoing the information provisions that allowed the different departments within government to work together, risking us moving back to a silo mentality, where government departments are not working effectively together.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan will have five minutes remaining in his time for his comments on the motion before the House and, of course, the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 37, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill S-211 under private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL SICKLE CELL AWARENESS DAY ACT

The House resumed from October 27 consideration of the motion that Bill S-211, An Act respecting National Sickle Cell Awareness Day, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to rise today to talk about designating June 19 as national sickle cell awareness day. When we think about this devastating disease, it certainly is an opportunity for us to realize how blessed we are in this country, not only those who are living without such a difficult illness, but also those who are living with it, because we are in a country where there is the possibility for help. There is a health care system in place and a House of Parliament that can talk about the many issues Canadians are facing.

That is exactly what the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has done by bringing up this awareness day. I commend the member for his work on behalf of his constituents and the people across this country who are suffering from this illness. Certainly, I know that the more than 2,000 people who are dealing with this would be very thankful to the member and the House as we discuss the awareness day for June 19.

There are a lot of issues that go along with this illness that we have been able to research and talk about, but there are so many Canadians out there who do not know about them. The idea of this awareness day is to get the word out. That would help researchers and those who are perhaps working to find ways to correct or deal with the illness. This motion and the designation of June 19 would help those individuals by providing awareness and marketing of what it is, and how they can help in the process of one day eventually defeating it.

Oftentimes when we see these sorts of days come forward, I certainly know there are some out there who would suggest that these are empty gestures. That is not the case. This is a great opportunity to talk about something that is afflicting many people in this country and around the world, and to do some very good work on behalf of those who are suffering from this illness and their families who are supporting and caring for them.

Today, I want to thank the member and offer my support. On June 19, I will be speaking to my children and letting them know what it is and what to look for in working with other people in the community, or boys and girls in their school, who may be dealing with this issue. We want to try to get awareness out there to ensure that as many people know about it as possible, as much support for research is offered as possible, and that the families know more than anything else that they are not alone through this fight.

I certainly look forward to the passing of this bill.

• (1835)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of my fellow members in the House for showing strong support for Bill S-211, an act respecting national sickle cell awareness day, including the member across the way who just spoke. When all parties work together for the good of all Canadians, we have the ability to accomplish so much in this place.

Adjournment Proceedings

Throughout all of the stages of this bill, I have been moved by the comments and personal stories from other members. I found that many members in this House and citizens across Canada have a personal connection to sickle cell disease and other rare blood disorders. We know that Canada is a world leader when it comes to championing human rights, along with maternal and newborn health. Canadians are compassionate and empathetic.

It was compassion and empathy that led Senator Jane Cordy to champion this bill through the other place. She has worked very hard to ensure that we all support those who are suffering with sickle cell disease. The sickle cell community is lucky to have a friend in Senator Jane Cordy. Senator Cordy's work has ensured that the bill before us today is already raising awareness. This bill matters to those who are suffering in Canada with sickle cell disease, and it deeply matters to their families and caregivers.

Awareness bills matter. A previous speaker alluded to this. Some folks may say that we parliamentarians create too many days of awareness, but I beg to differ. I believe they are wrong. Greater awareness will lead to less discrimination of those who are affected with this disease. We know that when it comes to health issues, especially issues that tend to affect specific demographics, we can stand together and raise awareness.

We know there are Canadians who do not know they carry the sickle cell trait. Stronger awareness will ensure that all Canadians have a better understanding of just what it means when someone we know has been diagnosed with sickle cell. We must continue to bring awareness to this serious hereditary genetic disease. It is estimated that around 5,000 people suffer from sickle cell disease in Canada. They are 5,000 very important voices.

I ask my fellow parliamentarians to continue to support Bill S-211, and for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast to join us in this place on June 19, 2018, as we observe national sickle cell awareness day in Canada. Let us send our strong and unified voices from this House to those who suffer from sickle cell disease.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 22, 2017, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on an issue on which Canadians need some accountability and on which the Minister of Finance can stick up for Canadians. We know that the Minister of Finance has been under a lot of pressure because of ethical questions related to his own financing and his connection to legislation in the House of Commons. A question I asked, and something he can act on, is about the financial impropriety of banks related to employees feeling pressure to sell Canadians products, which they do not feel is ethical. In fact, a CBC investigation brought forth a number of bank practices that are extremely disconcerting, from a public accountability point of view.

The finance minister has been under intense lobbying by the banks. Prior to his coming to this chamber, they already had a cozy relationship, from his previous private job. There has also been an issue of ethics and conflict of interest related to Morneau Shepell over a number of different pieces of legislation in the House of Commons.

I would ask the minister to take specific action on the predatory practices of the banks, not only in terms of a bad environment for people and their investments but because employees are being pressured to sell Canadians products that they do not think are in their best interest. Those products are investments and other elements related to people's finances.

The banks are using predatory practices to pressure the sale of a number of different products that are not helpful to Canadians. When people think they are going to the bank to get some type of service, not only do they face overcharging related to service charges but they find out that the premiums they are paying, some of the highest in the industrialized world, are not even giving them the internal support of the bank.

I would argue that these types of predatory practices, because they fall under the Bank Act, are something we should have seen from the government and the minister, given that they have been so compromised in relation to the ethical issues around the Minister of Finance.

When the minister responded to me, I was quite surprised that he talked about the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. It is not an appropriate response, from the head of our finances, to say that we already have one little agency that will protect Canadians. We needed the Minister of Finance to say that he has been deluged by bank lobbyists in his office, in the government, and on the Hill. They clearly have influence.

It is a time for the minister and the government to step up, whether it is on payday loans or high credit card fees. We have some of the highest rates for small business in the industrialized world, and we cannot even move on that.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am hoping today we hear about some type of backbone, especially given the compromised position of the government on this issue. Will the Liberals stand up for ordinary Canadians, especially since bank employees have been the whistleblowers?

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to respond to the question asked a few weeks ago and to provide some clarification.

I assure my colleague from Windsor West that the government is dedicated to modernizing and strengthening consumer protections on financial products across the country. We recognize that the financial sector plays a big role in the daily lives of Canadians.

[*English*]

Financial institutions take consumers' deposits and supply access to payment services, such as cheques and point-of-sale debits. They provide mortgages and car loans and also accommodate consumers' needs in areas like health and home insurance. In short, financial institutions permeate every aspect of our financial lives. That is why we want to ensure that there is a strong, efficient, and consistent regime in place that guarantees the highest standard of protection for all financial consumers, whether they bank online or in person.

Today we benefit from a financial services sector that is efficient, stable, and competitive in this country. However, we understand that this alone cannot guarantee that consumers are represented and protected sufficiently. The changes brought by globalization and technological innovation have contributed to creating a more complex business environment.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Even if consumers benefit from a much greater selection of products and services, their choices are more difficult to make because of how complex financial products have gotten. Often consumers do not have the necessary knowledge, competence, or confidence to make the wisest choices and that could make them vulnerable to unfair or aggressive marketing practices.

When they are better versed in financial knowledge, consumers can better manage their money and debt. They are also able to plan and save for the future and shield themselves against fraud and financial exploitation. These are among the reasons financial literacy is more important than ever and that is why November is Financial Literacy Month.

There is no better way to protect consumers than by giving them the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to make the informed financial decisions that are best for them. The government takes financial consumer protection very seriously, and that is why we asked the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, or FCAC, to work with the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI, to review bank sales practices and governance controls.

We also intend to see to it that we achieve our objective of having the highest overall level of protection for Canadians all across the country.

[*English*]

The government is firmly committed to consolidating and strengthening existing protections, to easing access to basic banking services, and to improving rules around existing business practices that govern how banks treat their consumers.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that we would get a bit more from the parliamentary secretary and a more serious response from the government on this. Here we really have the crux of everything when the member mentioned enlightened financial choices. The fact of the matter is that we can have all the enlightenment we want, but when the banks have in place an organized structural or institutional attempt to have their employees sell to Canadians products they do not need and given the cost of these products, it is nothing short of organized crime. It is an organized effort to move people's money to financial products that are not in their best interests.

Why are the government members not standing up for ordinary Canadians? The financial institutions are lobbying on their doorstep on an almost daily basis and are not getting the message that this is not only inappropriate, but also will be met with the same type of disdain and attitude. Canadians say they do not want to be ripped off anymore, not only in overt ways that are clear, such as payday loans and fees for their bank accounts, but in less overt organized efforts to sway them into banking practices and products they do not need. That is organized and awful.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his passion and dedication. I would like to give him some reassurance.

Our goal is very clear. We want to guarantee the highest standard of protection to bank customers and hold banks more accountable.

[*English*]

Fair treatment of bank customers is essential to the financial consumer protection framework and should be an integral part of banks' corporate culture. Banks' boards should oversee consumer protection by ensuring that appropriate policies are in place and that management and staff can carry them out.

[*Translation*]

The government's oversight of the financial services sector confirms its belief that the economy is working for the middle class and for everyone.

Again, I would like to reiterate that our goal is to guarantee the highest standard of protection for financial consumers in Canada, and we are working to achieve that goal.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight, as I have risen a number of times in the House, to seek an answer from the government about when it will do the right thing and compensate all of the victims and survivors of thalidomide. As I recently stated in this place, for close to 60 years, these Canadians have suffered from the ravages of this horrible drug which was approved by the government of the day. As they grow older, their conditions worsen, and they require more assistance than they cannot afford.

This past spring, the health committee made a series of recommendations to the minister after hearing from thalidomide compensation evaluation experts from around the world. These were experts from different countries where compensation has been awarded to all the sufferers. Based upon witness evidence, the committee recommended that the Canadian criteria for compensation be re-evaluated, that survivors who had been rejected receive a physical exam, and that the compensation requirements err in favour of probabilities.

These folks have suffered all of their lives because of their exposure to thalidomide, and now they are being denied even the decency of an in-person interview or the benefit of the doubt to see if they are truly suffering from the effects of thalidomide. The forgotten thalidomide survivors cannot produce paperwork or witnesses to prove that their mothers took thalidomide, as the current compensation package demands. These folks need to be given a personal interview by a qualified professional, and then given whatever tests are required to prove that their physical disabilities are not caused by a genetic anomaly. I am aware that there is no test that can prove thalidomide use by their mothers, but the physical evidence that they all display, and genetic testing to prove it is not something else, can go a long way to drawing a conclusion that thalidomide is the cause of their disabilities.

These survivors have all had extreme health and medical issues that continue to this day. These issues have required hospital stays, and many have had operations. Many have suffered from abuse and cruelty from other children. Many have taken as much training as possible, but have been unable to work or even find employment. One woman, who was featured on a *W5* report about the forgotten survivors, has suffered a lifetime of rejection and lives alone in the backwoods of British Columbia. These stories are heartbreaking.

The thing that bothers me is that we are only talking about two dozen people. In the overall scheme of things, what financial impact will assisting them have on our country as a whole? Let us put the cost into perspective in order to make their lives a little easier for however long they have remaining. As I have said in the past in the House, it is disgusting to think that we, as members of Parliament in the greatest country in the world, cannot collectively do something to assist a few of our fellow citizens who have suffered since birth as a result of a decision by our country's health department at the time.

Canada offered a compensation package in 1991, and it included an in-person examination. Many people were either not aware of the 1991 package, or their mothers never admitted to them that they had taken thalidomide. The second compensation package, which has

now been closed, was too restrictive in its demand for paperwork. It is important to note that Canada is not alone in its compensation offerings. In Britain, there was one offering, and then there was a second and greater offering when the victims realized the first package was not enough to compensate them. Victims in all of these places received the courtesy of an in-person examination and the benefit of the doubt.

I am calling on the government to show some compassion and understanding, and to move on the health committee's recommendation immediately.

• (1850)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the remarks and unrelenting commitment demonstrated by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. I want to assure him that we share his concern and compassion for the victims of thalidomide.

Thalidomide was marketed and approved in Canada more than 50 years ago as a sedative to treat nausea in pregnancy. Samples were available from July 1959, prior to approval in April 1961, and ultimately were withdrawn from the market in March 1962.

The drug had devastating consequences, leading to miscarriages, birth defects such as missing or stunted limbs, missing organs, and even death.

While the tragic results from the 1960s cannot be undone, they serve as a constant reminder to us all of how important drug safety is and how far it has advanced in Canada.

In 2014, the House of Commons unanimously adopted a motion offering support to survivors of thalidomide. Even in the absence of a legal obligation, there is agreement on the need to provide support for Canadian thalidomide survivors so they may age with dignity.

Since then there has been significant progress. Health Canada has made individual *ex gratia* payments of \$125,000 to thalidomide survivors and has established the thalidomide survivors contribution program. The first ongoing annual support payments were issued in March 2016 to confirmed survivors in keeping with government commitments. Further, an annual \$500,000 extraordinary medical assistance fund for survivors has been launched. This fund will assist survivors with expenses related to such things as home and vehicle modifications.

I want to assure every member of the House that the government has not forgotten about those who believe they may be victims of thalidomide. The thalidomide survivors contribution program provided an opportunity and a process to assess unconfirmed individuals who came forward to determine if they are thalidomide survivors and eligible for the same support.

Adjournment Proceedings

As of November 20, 2017, 25 new thalidomide survivors have been confirmed, which, in addition to the original 97 living survivors identified under the 1991 extraordinary assistance plan, brings the total number of Canadian thalidomide survivors to 122.

Sadly, each year a certain number of children are born with spontaneous or otherwise unaccountable malformations similar to those caused by thalidomide. As noted by witnesses appearing before the Standing Committee on Health, identification of thalidomide survivors is a complex issue. In the absence of a definitive medical test for thalidomide, the thalidomide survivors contribution program used an objective process to assess unconfirmed individuals to determine if they were thalidomide survivors.

The three eligibility criteria—verifiable proof of settlement from a drug company, documentary proof of maternal use of thalidomide, and listing on an existing government registry—were developed under the 1991 extraordinary assistance plan through a rigorous process involving consultation with representatives of approximately 400 persons who identified themselves at that time as thalidomide victims. Survivors who were confirmed in 1991 have previously met one or more of these criteria.

Our government appreciates that, given the passage of time, it may have been difficult for some individuals to find proof of whether their mother took thalidomide. As part of the eligibility assessment process, individuals who felt they were unable to meet the eligibility criteria were given the opportunity to explain their situation to the independent third-party administrator and provide what information they did have available in case they met the criteria. As each case is unique, the independent third-party administrator reviewed each claim individually and thoroughly before reaching an evidence-based decision.

Our government recognizes the importance of maintaining the relevance and responsiveness of Health Canada's programs. We are carefully reviewing the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health's recommendation calling for a review and reconsideration of the criteria used to determine an individual's eligibility for support.

The government has heard the committee and other individuals advocating for changes to the criteria. The committee's patience is appreciated while we continue to assess the recommendations.

It is through this historic program and unanimous commitment across all parties that Canada's thalidomide survivors are receiving this support, support that will assist them in accessing the care they need for the remainder of their lives.

● (1855)

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the parliamentary secretary for his interest in this issue.

The evidence that we heard at health committee meetings and the recommendations that were made by the committee really do speak for themselves.

There is only one thing left to do to wrap this up once and for all, and that is for the minister to accept the letter and the recommendations and provide compensation for the few remaining survivors who have not been able to access that compensation.

It was the Government of Canada that approved thalidomide. Ironically, it was a Canadian expert working in the United States who refused to approve it in that country. Had she been working here, we would not have had close to 60 years of this blight on our health care system.

It is past time to do the right thing. It is time for the government to respond to the recommendations of the committee, first, to ensure that an in-person interview is conducted, and second, that the government err on the side of compassion. It is time to do the right thing. The victims have endured a life of pain, suffering, and discrimination. It is time to do the right thing.

I would appreciate a response to the committee. I know the government wants to do the right thing.

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure you and the member opposite that we are also committed to doing the right thing. The thalidomide survivors contribution program is designed to support Canadian thalidomide survivors who have suffered a range of disabilities, significantly impacting their quality of life.

In programs such as the thalidomide survivors contribution program, it is important that eligibility assessments be done properly in order to reduce the risk of wrongfully attributing a person's condition. Some conditions which resemble thalidomide, but are not caused by thalidomide, can be transmitted to future generations. It is important for those individuals to obtain the right medical care and treatment.

As I had earlier stated, 25 additional individuals have been recognized as confirmed survivors. This shows that the criteria have produced some positive results. Furthermore, information gathered at the end of fiscal year 2016-17 indicated that 80% of confirmed survivors said that the thalidomide survivors contribution program was helping them age with dignity. This demonstrates that the program is achieving its intended impact.

I would ask for the House's patience while the government concludes its assessment of the recommendations made by the health committee. We will report back to the House as soon as that important work is completed.

● (1900)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, the Liberals made clear and specific promises to the Tamil community. The Liberals promised to support justice and reconciliation, to address the terrible crimes committed at the end of the civil war, and to confront ongoing human rights concerns for the Tamil community today.

However, as on so many fronts, the Liberals have failed to keep their promises. Frankly, we can see now how they cynically made any promise to any community that they thought would get votes, but then after the election, they completely ignore those promises.

Adjournment Proceedings

For Tamil Canadians, many of whom have family members impacted by human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, Liberal broken promises in this respect are a source of great disappointment. We, in the official opposition, have repeatedly raised this issue in the House. I asked the government about it during question period on November 7, and I also raised the point on May 15, May 17, and June 6. At no point has the government actually even claimed to be taking concrete action. Quite clearly, there is no action to speak of.

This was, in retrospect, a cynical election ploy. Tamil Canadians, like so many others who have been impacted by broken Liberal promises, feel betrayed by the lack of action from the government.

Frankly, rather than being helpful on the human rights front, the government has taken actions which have added insult to the injury.

For example, the Liberals eliminated the Office of Religious Freedom, which had played a critical role in promoting justice, reconciliation, pluralism, and inter-religious harmony around the world, and specifically in Sri Lanka. This set us back significantly with respect to our promotion of human rights around the world. The Liberals also eliminated the ambassador of religious freedom position. The previous ambassador was active on a range of fronts, which are particularly in discussion now, specifically with on-the-ground activities in Sri Lanka. The ambassador was also very active on the Rohingya issue. The cancellation of this office has set us back.

This past week, we know there were particular concerns about the participation of the Sri Lankan military in the peacekeeping conference in Vancouver. The government wanted this to be its big opportunity for peacekeeping fanfare, but in the process, it quietly gave immunity to those participating in the conference.

The order for immunity said, "Privileges and immunities are necessary in order to facilitate the participation of these individuals in the Ministerial and, in some cases, their entry into Canada." I would like to know who would have otherwise been inadmissible to Canada if this immunity order had not been put forward, and on what grounds? Were the grounds involvement in genocide? Crimes against humanity? We simply do not know what the minister had in mind.

Notably, there are not only human rights concerns around the actions of the Sri Lankan military in Sri Lanka, but also around its involvement in peacekeeping. The Associated Press reported that Sri Lankan peacekeepers in Haiti set up a sex ring involving children as young as 12. Of the 134 members of the military implicated, 114 did not receive any consequences. They went back to Sri Lanka without consequence.

Here is what I read recently in the *Toronto Star*. Someone wrote:

Given Sri Lanka's history in Haiti, its treatment of Tamils on the island, and its history of impunity, its soldiers should not be allowed to wear the blue helmet, which is often seen as the embodiment of peace and protection of the innocent.

Who wrote that? It was the Liberal member for Scarborough—Rouge Park. I agree with what he said. The Sri Lankan military still participated in the peacekeeping conference, under the protection of an immunity order issued by the Government of Canada. I do not doubt the commitment of the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park on this issue, but his own government has left him out in the cold.

Why is the government failing to honour its commitments to Tamil Canadians? Why is it ignoring the human rights situation in Sri Lanka?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the promotion and protection of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief and conscience, are key to this government's engagement around the world, as it is as well in Sri Lanka.

The new Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion works to leverage and enhance Canada's international contribution to human rights, diversity, inclusion, and democracy. For example, in Sri Lanka, Canada's peace and stabilization operations program supports Equitas, a Montreal-based non-governmental organization, to work with community leaders and educators to promote increased religious harmony, respect for human rights, and inclusion. Canada is also engaging through the International Civil Society Action Network and grassroots women-led organizations to promote peace, security, pluralism and equality. This project was announced to coincide with the launch of Canada's national action plan on women, peace, and security.

Starting in 2018, Canada is planning to implement a significant new project to promote language rights and the delivery of government services in both of the official languages in Sri Lanka, Tamil and Sinhalese. These international assistance efforts are reinforced by Canada's high commission to Sri Lanka in interactions with Sri Lankan counterparts, civil society, and other stakeholders, and in its social media messaging. Advocacy on these issues is a key component of every high level visit and delegation to Sri Lanka. In his visit to Colombo and Jaffna in July 2016, then foreign minister Stéphane Dion underscored Canada's support and expectations for the new Sri Lankan government's efforts to promote accountability, and human rights and reconciliation during meetings with members of the government, opposition, and civil society, including Tamil victims of conflict.

Canada continues to work proactively through multilateral forums to draw attention to human rights and reconciliation challenges in Sri Lanka. At the Human Rights Council, Canada is a traditional co-sponsor of resolutions on Sri Lanka, including HRC resolution 30/1. Canada has made constructive recommendations to the Government of Sri Lanka during three cycles of the universal periodic review on the situation of human rights in that country. At the most recent review on November 15, just last Wednesday, Canada urged Sri Lanka to expedite implementation of the reconciliation measures it has promised to carry out, to guarantee minority and women's rights, and to introduce a counterterrorism act that is compliant with international human rights standards.

In closing, our Prime Minister has reiterated Canada's firm stand that reconciliation is essential for peace to emerge on the island. To that end, Canada stands ready to support this process. All the victims of this conflict need closure, and Canada stands ready to support this process and assist in a victim-centred approach to reconciliation.

• (1905)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the response from the government is quite striking. We know that the Liberals are going to talk about it. However, while they talk about it in this House, we are seeing them undercutting the infrastructure which has existed in the past for advancing these issues.

It was interesting that the parliamentary secretary spoke about the Equitas program as if this were some initiative of the government. He should know that was a project that was undertaken and started under the previous government through the office of religious freedom. He wants us to credit the government for not cancelling it. I thank the government for not cancelling that program. However, the fact is that the commitment that the government made in the last election to the Tamil community was not to cancel every program that was promoting justice and reconciliation. The Liberals talked about trying to advance the ball with—it seemed that the implication was—new investments. However, not only have they undercut the situation by removing the office of religious freedom, taking away the ambassador as there is no new ambassador, but the only accomplishment they can point to is the continuation of a program that started under the previous government.

Adjournment Proceedings

What about the peacekeeping conference? We heard nothing from the member on that. He clearly does not want to talk about it.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey: Mr. Speaker, Canada is pleased and proud to re-engage in a meaningful peacekeeping role with our allies around the world, as we are committed to continuing the work that has been accomplished in the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, and to enhancing Canada's efforts to champion respect for diversity and human rights internationally.

Our government consistently calls for sustained progress on Sri Lanka's commitments on human rights, reconciliation, and transitional justice. We have consistently taken an active role in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to highlight ongoing human rights concerns, noting that much work remains on accountability, transitional justice, and reconciliation.

Beyond talking the talk, human rights, pluralism, and reconciliation are also priorities for concrete action for this government and Canada. This support will continue.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)

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