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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 23, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 23, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the parliamentary budget officer entitled “Analysis of Changes to the Taxation of Corporate Passive Investment Income”.

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[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the hon. to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, entitled “Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer: Promoting Best Practices”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

* * *

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT, 2017

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, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Monday, November 27, 2017, when debate concludes on the motion to refer Bill C-59 (An Act respecting national security matters) to committee before second reading, every question necessary to dispose of the said motion, shall be deemed put, and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on that day.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to present 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

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions from constituents in my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay, both relating to nuclear weapons. The first points out that 60 years after nuclear bombs devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people around the world still very much desire a nuclear weapons-free world. Therefore, they call upon Parliament to enact legislation to make Canada an official nuclear weapons-free zone.

The second petition refers to depleted uranium weapons. Petitioners point out these are radioactively and chemically toxic on impact, and they have been used in recent wars. They call on Parliament to enact legislation banning the manufacture and stockpiling of these weapons in Canada, and forbidding Canadian Forces from using depleted uranium weapons in any of their actions.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today on behalf of the wonderful constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

In the first petition, petitioners recognize that in 2008, the House of Commons adopted a motion in support of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and that the truth and reconciliation commission has called on this in their calls for action. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to adopt Bill C-262, an act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As evidenced by the sheer number—

The Speaker: I would remind all members not to provide editorial comment or debate during this process.

Business of Supply

BEE POPULATION

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on bees and pollinators. The sheer number of signatures is evidence of the importance my constituents attach to the issue. They recognize that honey bees contribute more than \$2.2 billion to Canada's agricultural economy each year, and are very concerned with the collapse in hives and the health of bees. Therefore, they call upon the Government of Canada to take concrete steps to solve the problem of the high mortality rate among bees and other insect pollinators and to develop a strategy to address the multiple factors related to bee colony deaths.

As a small-scale farmer myself, I can very much attach importance to this message.

• (1010)

[Translation]

CANADIAN ARMS SALES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to present a petition signed by hundreds of students at École secondaire La Poudrière in Drummondville.

The petitioners state that, because Saudi Arabia has one of the world's worst human rights records, the government should cancel the \$15-billion contract to sell light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to end Canadian arms sales to countries that violate human rights.

[English]

EATING DISORDERS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise one more time to table a petition with respect to eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia. It indicates that these types of illnesses have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses, that children as young as seven are diagnosed with eating disorders, that more than one million Canadians suffer, and that families have been negatively affected. It also indicates that the damage it causes can affect the brain; cause hair, skin, and bone mass loss; and cause the heart to shut down. It states that the first cause of death is cardiac arrest, and the second is suicide.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to support Motion No. 117, which happens to be my motion. They are also asking the government to work with the provincial and territorial governments and all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive pan-Canadian strategy for eating disorders to include better prevention, diagnosis, treatment, support, and research.

I would add that the petitioners are from Penetanguishene, Penetang, Midland, Tiny, London, Kitchener, Guelph, and Cambridge.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FINANCE MINISTER'S ASSETS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that "sunshine is the best disinfectant"; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

He said: Mr. Speaker, we are called to this place to act in the public interest, to advantage the people we represent and not ourselves. No one has more power to advantage either himself or others than the Minister of Finance. He imposes taxation, tariffs, regulation, and subsidies. His department sells hundreds of billions of dollars of bonds on the market, which pay interest from Canadian taxpayers to lenders here and around the world. As the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, with whom I will be splitting my time, will point out later, those powers must always be carried out in the public interest.

There are two major dangers in allowing one man or woman to have so much financial power. The first is the danger of a conflict of interest, and the second is the misuse of privileged information. Let us begin with the first.

When any individual controls \$330 billion of other people's money and regulates how businesses operate, then he or she can make decisions to favour companies or entities in which he or she has ownership. For example, the Minister of Finance was executive chairman of a billion-dollar pension administration company before he took his public duties. During that time, he advocated for a new hybrid model of pension called a "targeted benefit pension plan". Those plans take from defined benefit plans and defined contribution plans, mix them together, and then provide people with a pension that has a benefit that is aspirational rather than locked in stone. In other words, the company would promise that it would try to deliver a certain benefit to future retirees who worked for the company, but acknowledge that market conditions may change, and therefore the benefit may also change with it.

Business of Supply

These are highly technical, very specialized pension products, and very few companies offer them. I have had my research team scour the financial system and they have found that there are only three companies in Canada that have any specialization in offering these unique products. One of them is Morneau Shepell, the very company that the Minister of Finance helped create and for which he was the executive chairman. Up until only weeks ago, he had continuing interests of approximately \$20 million in that very company. He then introduced a bill that would allow that company to provide these highly specialized financial products, or targeted benefit pension plans.

Let me be clear about the specificity as opposed to the generality of this particular initiative. Generally, he introduced a bill on pensions while owning shares in a pension company. Specifically, he introduced a unique financial product, which this company provides, through a bill in the House of Commons. Even more specifically, he used the unique model that exists only in New Brunswick as the prototype for the bill he would introduce here in the House of Commons.

Who helped unveil and design that model? It was Morneau Shepell. When? It was while the minister himself was the executive chairman of that very company. Therefore, this is not a matter of general application, but a matter of high specificity.

• (1015)

The law says that a minister of finance can advantage himself as long as he is advantaging everybody else at exactly the same time. When Jim Flaherty got a discount on a hockey stick at Canadian Tire, because he cut the GST, he was not in a conflict of interest, because anyone else could have saved two percentage points on a hockey stick, all 35 million Canadians.

This bill, by contrast, is so unique, so specialized and technical, that not only are there only about three companies in all of Canada that could provide the product created in the bill, but of those three, the one that had previously designed the product in question, and all the detailed contours of that product, was the minister's company, a company named after his family, a company in which his father is a board member, a company in which, until discovered, the minister himself held \$20 million in shares. It is a highly specific, clear conflict of interest.

There is another issue, and that is the advanced use of privileged information. Ministers have the ability to make stock markets rise and fall, because they make announcements on regulation and taxation that influence and affect the markets. That is why we have to ensure that they do not make financial decisions of their own on buying and selling stocks, using that information before it is available to everyone else.

The basis of the free market system is that buyer and seller have at their disposal the same information so that neither has an unfair advantage over another. One might do a better job of researching or accessing that information, but as long as it is equally available, there is no problem. That is precisely why we have a tradition, a very carefully guarded tradition, that no market-moving information is to be introduced before the closing of the markets.

Typically, big announcements by government are made throughout the day, but not big market-moving announcements. They are made in the evening so that nobody can get the news, get online, and make a trade. That is how seriously we take the commitment that everyone in the marketplace is on the same, equal footing and that no one has an informational advantage over anyone else.

That informational advantage is not an academic question, because if the buyer knows more than the seller, or the seller knows more than the buyer, the person who has the advance knowledge is actually, in a strange way, robbing the person with whom he or she is carrying out the transaction.

If John knows more than Jim because of this privileged information, and John sells stocks to Jim on the basis of that privileged information, he may, for example, get a better price than he would have if Jim knew what was really going on, so Jim is shortchanged, because he has to pay more than he would have paid if he had had the same information as John. That is why John and Jim and Bill and everyone else should know exactly the same things when they agree to the voluntary exchange of securities in the stock market.

That latter danger, the danger of allowing some to have privileged information over the rest of the marketplace, has been an under-explored aspect of the finance minister's personal controversy, one we will explore in greater detail, and one way to explore it is by opening up his books.

The minister has a vast array of numbered companies and trust funds in which he has assets, which he has not revealed, that he held over two years while making important decisions that could enrich himself at everyone else's expense. If he has nothing to hide, he will stand today with us in the House and support the motion. He will tell Canadians everything he has owned, both personally and through these companies, so that all of us can judge his conduct and ensure that he has always acted in the public interest and not in his private interest.

• (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, former prime minister Stephen Harper affirmed the Ethics Commissioner and the role she played. In fact, the rules this government is operating under are identical to the rules the Conservatives operated under when they were in government.

The other thing that is worthy of noting is that this particular minister has been under attack virtually since day one as he has provided many wonderful initiatives for Canada's middle class. I will have the opportunity to expand on some of those initiatives.

The office of the commissioner is independent. We have a joint opposition across the way that continuously wants to attack the character of the Minister of Finance. Since day one, the opposition has been after the Minister of Finance, and he has done exactly what other ministers, including ministers under the Harper government, did.

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member's logic is that because the minister has done so many wonderful things, he does not have to be accountable to Canadians. I would question the pretext of his argument.

I am not going to concede that the minister has done any wonderful things for anybody other than himself. If that member disagrees with me, he will vote for the motion, because if he believes that this minister has acted with unimpeachable integrity, he will throw open the blinds and let in the sunshine, which the Prime Minister has called the greatest disinfectant. He will let all eyes see what there is inside and behind those blinds.

I will conclude by saying this. The member continually says, no problem, the minister has filed everything in a secret report to the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner works for the House of Commons. Let us be clear; so does the minister. In our parliamentary system, we are all accountable to Parliament, not to a bureaucrat or an official somewhere in the apparatus of the government. We are accountable to this place, because this is the place that is elected by the Canadian people, and it is in this place he should be.

•(1025)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I extend my colleague's comments to say that we are accountable to the people who sent us here, specifically on the promises we made to them during the election and since.

The Prime Minister made a commitment, as did all of his cabinet ministers, that their personal holdings would bear the fullest public scrutiny. That is from the Prime Minister's letter to his cabinet ministers.

We only found out about the Morneau Shepell shares that were still being held and controlled, and not in a blind trust, and not sold, because journalists at *The Globe and Mail* dug until they found them. It was not the finance minister, for all his great character, which my friend from Winnipeg talks about, who came to Canadians and said, "By the way, I know I let it be known that my affairs have been placed in a blind trust." The Liberals repeated that line ad nauseam. Morneau Shepell believed that as well. That turned out to be a lie.

A question of trust and confidence in a finance minister is pivotal, because he or she is such a powerful figure. As the ethics code sits right now, which this minister apparently, allegedly followed, there is a distinction between whether shares are held in direct control or are placed in a numbered company wholly owned by an individual and wholly benefiting that individual. The ethics code right now makes a distinction between those two situations, whereas a Canadian will look at that and say, "If the money is going to the same person wholly, what is the difference?"

I am wondering if my friend can comment on this loophole that may have been exploited by the finance minister to relieve himself of any alleged conflict of interest.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, when I was a teenager, I worked at Telus. I was in the collections department. I will tell members that when one calls people to collect on their phone bills, and they are in business, the nicest people in the world on the other

end of the line are the people who are paying their bills to keep their phone service intact. As a result of this, as a teenager earning about 12 bucks an hour, I got to own some shares in Telus. I got a little certificate, and I kept it as a keepsake. It was worth about 70 bucks when I left.

I came to Parliament, got elected, and the Ethics Commissioner said that I could not even keep that little certificate worth 70 bucks. I had to go to a bank teller and sell it, because there might be a conflict of interest if I did not.

It was 70 bucks, yet the minister had \$20 million in shares while he was in charge of our financial markets and regulating the very company in which he had invested. This was an obvious conflict of interest. He should have known better. He should not blame the law or the Ethics Commissioner for his failed judgment.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have always been of the belief that every person, from the moment they first achieve cognitive thought, knows the difference between right and wrong, everyone except, it appears, this Minister of Finance. The finance minister has been involved in so many ethical transgressions in the last two years that I honestly believe it would be fair to say that I do not know if he understands the difference between right and wrong. If he does, it appears that he simply does not care.

For the benefit of the House and the benefit of those who may be watching today, I am going to enumerate some of these transgressions and what they mean in today's Parliament, what they mean to Canadians, and what they mean to those who may find themselves in a real or apparent conflict of interest.

We first found out a few months ago that the Minister of Finance had failed to sufficiently disclose all of his assets to the Ethics Commissioner. In fact, he failed to disclose a very significant asset. What was that asset? That asset was a villa in the region of Provence, in the south of France. I am not really that knowledgeable about real estate, but I would assume that a villa in that region, a very wealthy part of France, is probably worth in the millions of dollars.

Going back just a little, I should point out that all parliamentarians, since 2004, have been required, and are still required, on a yearly basis, to disclose to the Ethics Commissioner all of our assets and liabilities, and in fact the assets and liabilities of our spouses and family members. For example, if a member owns a house, what is its relative value? Does it have a mortgage? Does the member own mutual funds, stocks, bonds, or trust funds? Does the member own real property? Members report that to the Ethics Commissioner each and every year so that she will be able to determine if there is any perceived or real conflict of interest or if there could be a potential conflict of interest. Did the Minister of Finance do that? No. He failed to disclose a a million-dollar-plus asset owned by a private corporation, which he controlled. Could that potentially be a conflict of interest? Most certainly it could.

Business of Supply

However, when queried by the media as to why he did not disclose this to the Ethics Commissioner appropriately and on time, he merely stated that it was an administrative error. I do not know about other members, but to me, making a million-dollar omission on a disclosure to the Ethics Commissioner is much more than an administrative error.

That was the first, but certainly not the last, of these ethical lapses we have seen from the Minister of Finance. We next learned, through a report first published in *The Globe and Mail*, that the minister was the owner of a private corporation, a numbered company in fact, in Alberta. We also found out that this numbered company had assets. Specifically, it owned approximately \$20 million in shares in a company called Morneau Shepell.

As my colleague from Carleton pointed out just a few moments ago, that is the same company the current Minister of Finance used to run, a family-founded, family-run, very successful company that specializes in pensions and pension products. That alone should have raised a lot of alarm bells, but it gets even worse.

We later found out, again from *The Globe and Mail*, that the minister had not placed these assets, the approximately \$20 million in shares, in a blind trust. He had, however, implied, to many people, including his colleagues on the government side of the House, that he had placed all his assets in a blind trust. He had told his former colleagues and former co-workers at Morneau Shepell that he had placed his assets in a blind trust. He had not. That was a clear conflict of interest and a clear violation of the ethics code.

● (1030)

In addition to that, at the same time as he was benefiting from shares in a numbered company which he had not disclosed, he introduced Bill C-27 in this place, a bill sponsored by the minister and brought forward by the minister, that would, in effect, if passed into legislation, allow employers to change their pension plans from defined benefit plans to targeted benefit plans.

I will not get into the details or nuances of the differences between those two pension plans. Suffice it to say, the minister, through his numbered company in Alberta, saw the share price rise, approximately \$5 million worth. In other words, because it was not in a blind trust and still directly controlled by the minister through his numbered company, he and his family benefited to the tune of \$5 million. Once he introduced Bill C-27, the speculation in the stock market was that Morneau Shepell would be gathering and garnering much more business across Canada due to it being the largest firm in Canada specializing in these products.

It was only after all of these revelations came to light did the minister determine he should sell his assets and place any other assets into a blind trust. That is akin to somebody saying “I’m sorry” after getting caught. In fact, I received an email from one of my constituents after the story came to light, in which he said that it reminded him of a bank robber who got caught a couple of years later, promised to pay the money back to the bank, then went on to say no harm, no foul, that everyone could move on because there was nothing to see. It does not work that way. One has to be accountable for one’s actions.

The very definition of “conflict of interest” determines quite clearly that the Minister of Finance was, for two solid years, in a serious conflict of interest.

I go back to my opening comments. I am not sure if the minister truly understands the difference between right and wrong, but today we are giving the minister an opportunity to do what is right. To do what is right means simply this: disclosing all of the minister’s assets he currently holds in numbered companies. Why is that important? Because having assets in a number company means Canadians do not know what those assets are.

What could they be? Let us assume for a moment that some of those assets are shares in, let us say, Bombardier. Would that be a conflict of interest? Clearly, it would. What would happen if some of the shares in those numbered companies owned by the Minister of Finance are shares in a company like Irving Shipbuilding or Davie shipbuilding? What happens if those shares, which we do not know about in these numbered companies, were shares in a medicinal marijuana company that is coming onto the market? There are so many things that could be conflicts of interest that we do not know about that the minister must reveal the sources of those assets, if only to gain, or regain, the confidence of the Canadian public and to prove to it that he is not in a conflict of interest.

By refusing to reveal the assets in these numbered companies, all he is doing is reinforcing in the public’s mind that he is like every other dirty politician out for personal benefit and not for the public interest.

I call upon the minister to simply do what is right, and that is to reveal the assets, open the books, and let the Canadian public see what he has been hiding for these last two years.

● (1035)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member knows very well, as Canadians should know, that there is a process in this place and there are independent officers of Parliament. Independent officers of Parliament have a responsibility to ensure that members of Parliament are in compliance and also that the partisanship of this place is not reflected in that work so we can serve in the best interests of Canadians.

Does the hon. member agree that the independent officer of Parliament has the responsibility to know the information that the Minister of Finance has disclosed, that she is more than capable of doing her job, and that we should let her do her job?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the roles and responsibilities of the Ethics Commissioner. It is the ethics of the finance minister that are under question, not the motives or the ethics of the commissioner.

For two years, the minister basically deceived the Ethics Commissioner by refusing to reveal that his assets in a numbered company in Alberta were not held in a blind trust. It was only after an investigative story appeared in the media that the Ethics Commissioner became aware of that.

Business of Supply

If the minister truly wanted to be forthcoming and if the minister truly believed in proactive disclosure, he would have informed the Ethics Commissioner at the outset of his time in Parliament. He chose not to do so. That was a decision made by the finance minister to deceive the Ethics Commissioner and that is intolerable and unconscionable. Quite frankly, the minister should be ashamed of his actions.

•(1040)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals like to congratulate themselves when they take some action. They often say that they are making history, or that this is a historic decision or action. They have made history here because never before have we had a Prime Minister and a finance minister under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner at the same time. It confounds to me.

I will read a citation from the Prime Minister and I will ask my friend to comment on it. This is what confuses me and I think confuses many Canadians as to why Parliament has to spend a whole day simply asking Liberals to keep a Liberal promise. The promise reads, “both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.”

The only reason we found out that the finance minister still maintained control of his \$30-odd million in Morneau Shepell was because some journalists found out. That was not public scrutiny he offered up, it was only dug up. There still remain five or six numbered companies about which the finance minister will not tell us. Public scrutiny means just that.

Could my friend comment on how difficult it is to get a Liberal to keep a Liberal promise?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, my friend from the NDP is quite right. It is almost impossible these days to get a Liberal to keep a promise, but that is perhaps a debate for another day.

I would agree with my hon. colleague on this fact. Because the finance minister's position in Parliament is arguably the second most important person in government, he must be held to not only meet the minimum standards but to exceed standards and expectations of the general public.

We know about the Conflict of Interest Act. We know the definition of a conflict of interest. What is also contained in that definition is that a decision maker, which obviously the finance minister is, cannot be viewed as acting impartially or with integrity if he or she may receive personal benefits from their decisions.

What happened was that the Minister of Finance decided not to put his assets into a blind trust. The Minister of Finance decided to introduce Bill C-27, which definitely benefited his family's fortune to the tune of about \$5 million. Those were deliberate decisions made by the Minister of Finance, which contravened every single tenet of the Conflict of Interest Act.

I know the minister is under investigation. I encourage the Ethics Commissioner to find a resolution to this with great haste. Canadians need to have the confidence that their elected officials, particularly their Minister of Finance, is acting with the integrity they have been charged to uphold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, what is clear and what I have said repeatedly in the House is that the Minister of Finance, like all other parliamentarians in the House, did what is expected of everyone who has the privilege of serving in this place, that is, he met with the Ethics Commissioner, presented his entire situation, and worked with her to come up with the best way to comply with the rules and ensure that the highest standards of integrity are met.

That is exactly what the minister did as soon as he came to Ottawa. The Ethics Commissioner recommended that he set up a conflict of interest screen, which he did. That measure was good enough for the ministers in the previous government, and the Ethics Commissioner determined that that was the best possible measure of compliance.

The Minister of Finance has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner, and he will continue doing so without fail. He announced that he would go even further than her initial recommendations. What I am seeing is an opposition that is doing anything it can to distract from the finance minister's record, and our government's record, when it comes to the economy.

•(1045)

[*English*]

The opposition is going to great lengths to talk about anything other than the Canadian economy and the help we are bringing to middle-class Canadians and Canadians from all walks of life. They do not want to talk about the half a million new jobs that have been created over the last two years. They do not want to talk about how our economy is growing faster than any other in the G7, including the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany.

After 10 years of watching the wealthiest get further ahead and the rest get further behind, we are working to ensure Canada's middle class feels confident that its economy is working for it and that no matter what cards people are dealt with at birth, they can play a good hand.

Canada's middle class is stronger today because of the hard work and leadership of our finance minister.

To serve to the best of his ability, since day one the finance minister has worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and followed her recommendations and advice. In this spirit, the minister has always made an effort to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner on any matter, going above and beyond her recommendations.

The finance minister is focused on his job, growing our economy, and ensuring the benefits of our economic success result in more opportunities for every Canadian. The fact is that opposition members are focusing on personal attacks so they do not have to admit that our plan is working precisely where theirs failed for too long.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Under our plan, the government is making smart investments that are creating well-paying jobs, growing the economy, and giving all Canadians a real chance at success.

[English]

Our investments in people, communities, and the economy are making Canada stronger and positioning Canadians for success in the economy of tomorrow.

[Translation]

When we came to office two years ago, we took immediate action to help the middle class. We introduced the middle-class tax cut, while asking the wealthiest Canadians to pay a little more. Nine million Canadians are benefiting from that tax cut.

In addition, thanks to the Canada child benefit, nine out of 10 Canadian families are receiving more in child benefits than they did under the previous system. We also estimate that with the introduction of the Canada child benefit, child poverty—

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is a rule in the Standing Orders that requires people speaking to a motion in the House of Commons to respect the rule of relevance. They must actually speak to the specific motion on the floor of the House.

While I hear the member talking about interesting things, these are not anywhere even remotely close to the actual motion on the floor, which relates to the affairs of the finance minister and his failure to disclose to Canadians transparently, as required, the holdings he has in order to establish he is following the ethics rules. This is nowhere close to that.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you require that anybody addressing this motion show some shred of relevance. I understand latitude is often provided, but we are so far out of the ballpark here that it is not even close.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for York—Simcoe for his intervention. He is certainly right that relevance to the motion before the House is the boundary by which members should guard their comments and interventions. I note that the hon. parliamentary secretary is about five minutes into his 20-minute time period. I encourage him to bring his comments around to the motion before the House.

However, in that regard, members are also afforded a degree of liberty around how they can pose those arguments. As long as they introduce the ideas they are presenting to the relevance of the motions before the House, they are able to present arguments around those ideas as well.

I will ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue and to keep in mind the motion before the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I was doing. It would have been nice if the opposition member had listened to the first part of my speech, because I did talk about what the Minister of Finance has done since coming to Ottawa, in terms of

working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to make sure all the rules are being followed.

Talking is one thing, but listening is another. I urge the member to listen. He said I was talking about interesting things. It will only get more interesting from here on out, so it is important to listen closely.

I was in the middle of talking about the interesting fact that child poverty in Canada has been reduced by 40%. That is something interesting. However, what we are talking about is not just reducing child poverty by 40%, but how we did it, namely through the Canada child benefit.

In the motion, we are talking about the work of the Minister of Finance. When he first arrived here, he reviewed the Canada child benefit with our government to find ways to make it more progressive and to better target families who need it the most. The government stopped sending cheques to millionaire families like the previous government did.

The minister also looked at the increased limit for the tax free savings account. Hon. members will recall that the Conservatives increased the TFSA limit to \$11,000 and did so with great fanfare. The American who came up this concept in the first place said that this was absolutely crazy, and that it would put the government in a fiscal straitjacket. However, when the Conservative government's then finance minister was asked what he would do for future generations, when the government was starved of money for carrying out its duties, he said that we should leave that problem to Stephen Harper's granddaughter to solve.

We are not leaving any problems for anyone's granddaughter. We are dealing with issues that affect Canadians today, and that is precisely what we did when we introduced the Canada child benefit.

I am very proud to say that in our fall economic statement last month, we took steps to further strengthen the Canada child benefit by proposing to index it to inflation almost two years ahead of schedule, starting in July 2018. This will ensure that as the cost of living rises, so does the Canada child benefit, which is important to Canadian families. This is our focus on this side of the House.

A strengthened Canada child benefit means additional support to help pay for books, winter jackets, and skating lessons. These are the kinds of things Canadian families need.

The added confidence the Canada child benefit brings to families has been shown to have an immediate impact on economic growth. Canada is the fastest-growing economy in the G7. We are not stopping there, and neither is the Minister of Finance. In the fall economic statement, we also announced that we would provide more support for low-income workers.

Starting in 2019, the government will enhance the working income tax benefit, or WITB, by an additional \$500 million per year.

Business of Supply

This will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers, including families without children and the growing number of single Canadians. This enhancement will be in addition to the increase of about \$250 million annually that will come into effect in that year as part of the enhancement of the Canada pension plan.

By these two actions alone, the government will boost the total amount spent on the working income tax benefit by about 65% in 2019, increasing benefits to current recipients and expanding the number of Canadians who receive this much needed support.

When we compare this to the former government's measures, such as the increase to the TFSA contribution limit and income splitting for families, which, as the parliamentary budget officer indicated at the time, benefited the wealthiest 10%, we can see the difference between the priorities of the Harper Conservatives and our government. Our priority is to help as many Canadians as we can, particularly those who need it most.

This extra money can help cover the grocery bill or buy warm clothes for winter. The improved benefit will help low-income working Canadians make ends meet.

•(1050)

[English]

The government has also taken important steps to secure a brighter future for Canadians. In the last two years, we have strengthened retirement security, housing, and health care. In June 2016, Canadian finance ministers worked collaboratively to reach an historic agreement to strengthen the Canada pension plan, the CPP. The CPP enhancement will take effect in January 2019. At maturity, it will increase the maximum CPP retirement benefit by about 50%, which in today's dollars will represent an increase of nearly \$7,000, to a maximum benefit of around \$20,000. I am proud that earlier this month my very own province of Quebec took action to enhance the Quebec pension plan in a similar fashion to the Canada pension plan. This complements the government's plan to build an economy that works for the middle class, and means that Canadians in all 10 provinces and three territories can look forward to a safer, more secure, and dignified retirement.

On housing, the government has re-established its leadership role. No less than yesterday, the government announced Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, a 10-year, \$40 billion plan that will give more Canadians a place to call home. This bold 10-year, \$40 million—

•(1055)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been listening patiently following your encouragement that we wait to see if there might be some relevance in this speech and arguments. I thought that when we got into the government's housing strategy, we might hear about the French villa that was part of the finance minister's assets that he failed to disclose to the Ethics Commissioner.

The motion states:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that "sunshine is the best disinfectant"; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

The member has failed to say a passing word related to the motion on the floor. He is speaking about everything the finance minister has done, except with respect to his ethical disclosures.

As I said, I thought that when we got into the housing policy he might talk about the French villa the finance minister failed to disclose, and that when he started talking about pensions, he might address the ethical conflict of holding shares in a company that regulated those pensions. He did not address that. He just went right on by that issue.

There is simply no relevance whatsoever in his speech. In fact, it fits the pattern of the government all the way through, which is to stonewall, and stonewalling, by failing to be relevant, is simply not permitted. We have a lot of latitude. However, what we have here is a shameful disregard for the role of this Parliament with respect to the ethics rules, the failure to disclose, and the fundamental nature of the motion. The member's failure to address the motion with even a word heightens and furthers that contempt by the government.

Therefore, I would ask that, unless the member gets to the point and in some way addresses the motion, you conclude that this speech is not in order and is not relevant.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for York—Simcoe for his remarks. It is true that the rule regarding relevancy is important.

[English]

I would say that I certainly agree with the hon. member for York—Simcoe with respect to his demand that the rules of relevance be followed in the House. Certainly, those are the orders that apply to all of us.

As I have indicated in the past on questions of this nature, what is important is that members create a connection between the arguments and positions they are posing in the House and how those ideas are relevant to the question before the House, and then continue with their explanations and arguments in that regard. If that link or connection is not made at the outset of the speech they are presenting, it is difficult for members to put into context how those particular arguments refer to the very question the House is taken up with throughout the course of the day.

Therefore, we will go back to the hon. parliamentary secretary, ask him to put that into the right context, and continue from there.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, what I hear from the member opposite also fits a pattern of the opposition playing politics while we work for Canadians. I find it regrettable that the member opposite would make a mockery of the housing strategy, the first in Canada, which will help reduce the housing needs of 530,000 households, and reduce chronic homelessness by half in this country. I find it quite regrettable that he would make a mockery of that.

Business of Supply

However, I will address what the member mentioned, as I did at the beginning of my speech, had he paid attention. I said that the finance minister, as he and all parliamentarians are expected to, worked with the Ethics Commissioner from the get-go, when he got to Ottawa. He disclosed to her, with full transparency, all of his assets and asked her to set the path he should follow. She recommended that he put in place a conflict of interest screen, which was good enough for the ministers of the Harper government and she deemed to be the best measure of compliance possible.

Now the finance minister has announced that he would go—

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are all supposed to conduct ourselves with appropriateness, honesty, and transparency in this House. One of the things that is not permitted is a member to knowingly mislead the House. It is a very serious question of privilege that I will not raise at this point, but I would simply ask the member to correct himself. It is a matter of public record that the Minister of Finance did not disclose his holding in a French villa, as required by the ethics rules. He later did disclose it when required to, and was convicted and fined for having violated those rules. Therefore, when the member says to the House—

• (1100)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I appreciate the intervention by the hon. member for York—Simcoe. I believe we are into a debate on the matters that have been presented in the House, and the hon. member will have the opportunity, perhaps under questions and comments, to pose those kinds of arguments. I do not see that as a point of order.

We will go back to the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the finance minister from the very beginning has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner and continues to do so—

An hon. member: From the beginning?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Yes, from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, he has worked with the Ethics Commissioner. He has put in place what she deemed to be the best measure possible, a conflict of interest screen, and has now announced that he will go even above and beyond that and place all of his assets in a blind trust. He has divested himself of all shares in Morneau Shepell so he can continue the important work he has been doing for Canadians for the last two years, work that has generated more success for the Canadian people and the Canadian economy than that party ever could achieve in 10 years. Under the previous Conservatives, we had sluggish growth and high unemployment.

Members may remember the debate in the last federal election two years ago on whether Canada was heading into a recession. No one is asking that question now, because Canada has the strongest growth in the G7. We have created half a million jobs over the last two years, and that is the direct work of the finance minister. He has worked with the Ethics Commissioner and done everything according to the rules. That is precisely why he is able to do the important work he has been doing for the last two years for Canadians, and will continue to do.

On health care, the government has reached new health funding agreements with the governments of all provinces and territories. Each will receive its share of the \$11 billion federal investment in home care and mental health care. This means that Canadian families can look forward to better health care support, particularly in the urgent priorities of home care and mental health, and that is a result of the work of the finance minister.

[*Translation*]

In addition to the investments I just mentioned, since we came to office, we have also invested in small businesses, which we know are the engine of the Canadian economy and provide millions of Canadians with good well-paying jobs.

The government is helping small businesses to invest, grow, and create jobs by proposing to lower the small business tax rate to 10% as of January 1, 2018, and to 9% as of January 1, 2019.

[*English*]

For the average small business, this will leave an additional \$1,600 per year for entrepreneurs and innovators to reinvest in their businesses and to create jobs.

Finally, the government intends to make important changes to the tax system that will ensure that Canada's low corporate tax rates go toward supporting businesses, not to providing unfair tax advantages to high-income and wealthy Canadians.

The steps taken to date are having a real and positive impact on our economy and on the middle class and Canadians from all walks of life. Optimism is on the rise, and with good reason. Our plan to strengthen the middle class and grow the economy over the long term is working. Job creation is strong, with over 500,000 new jobs created in the last two years, most of them full time, and our youth unemployment rate is near its lowest level on record.

Canada has the fastest growing economy in the G7 by a wide margin, growing at an average of 3.7% over the last year, which is the fastest pace of growth since early 2006.

[*Translation*]

Growth is forecast to be 3.1% in 2017, which is significantly above expectations at the beginning of the year.

The fiscal outlook has also improved by more than \$6.5 billion annually on average from what was projected in budget 2017.

I know it is also important for all members to recall that the federal debt-to-GDP ratio is firmly on a downward track, and that Canada continues to have the best fiscal position among G7 countries.

I want to point out that when we came to power in 2015, our debt-to-GDP ratio was 32.5%; it is now 30.5%. Over the course of the next few years, it will drop under 30% and below 1977 levels.

Canada's economic position is the envy of the world and the result of the efforts of the Minister of Finance, who came in with the right plan at the right time for Canada's economy, and made investments in our infrastructure and enhanced the Canada child benefit, among other things.

Business of Supply

Our government is committed to sound fiscal management as it continues to make investments to support long-term economic growth and a strong middle class. We will do this while preserving Canada's low-debt advantage for current and future generations. Canada's economic performance is impressive. Now, we can also say that our performance on social issues is impressive.

In my opinion, Canada is back on track because of the efforts of the Minister of Finance and of our government, after 10 years under a government that focused too much on the wealthiest and failed to achieve satisfactory results for Canadians.

• (1105)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Louis-Hébert and I are about the same age. We are both involved in our communities and in politics, as evidenced by our presence here as members of the House of Commons.

At the very beginning of his term in office, I remember the member for Louis-Hébert telling the media loud and clear that he wanted to fight cynicism, which he felt was rampant in our society. Perhaps if he takes a step back, he will see that he is not living up to that ideal and that he is actually contributing to the cynicism he says he wants to fight.

Although his government has done some things that make sense and are good for Canadians, today we are debating a very important motion, one that will help fight cynicism and make the Minister of Finance realize that he has done things to undermine Canadians' confidence.

The member for Louis-Hébert came very close to having a question of privilege raised against him, which is very serious, when he shamelessly said that the Minister of Finance had disclosed everything to the Ethics Commissioner, which was not the case. He did not disclose his villa in France, which earned him a \$200 fine. I would therefore ask the member for Louis-Hébert to redeem himself and to openly acknowledge that he knows that today we are debating one very specific thing, namely the Minister of Finance's responsibility to be 100% ethically clean. What we want him to do as parliamentary secretary is to assure us that the Minister of Finance does not have any assets that could put him in a conflict of interest situation.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, it is good to know that I was almost the object of a question of privilege.

With regard to the property in France, it had been disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner and she knew about it. The corporate entity that owns the villa was not disclosed due to an administrative error.

The member talked about fighting cynicism. I do have a great deal of respect for a man like the Minister of Finance, who left the private sector to serve his country, at great personal sacrifice, and did so by accomplishing a great many things.

If the member wants to talk about fighting cynicism, I will tell him why I got into politics. I got into politics to reduce the growing inequalities I witnessed during the 10-year reign of the previous government, which was too busy showering tax breaks on the wealthy to worry about social housing needs, inequality, or the families in my riding who were having trouble making ends meet, like my own family did when I was a child.

The previous government sent out benefit cheques that were not only taxable, but also failed to take the family's income into account. The previous government also raised the TFSA contribution limit, a move that benefited the wealthiest 5%, as I mentioned in my speech. I do not know many people who are able to contribute the maximum amount to their TFSA at the end of the year, and I know there are not many people like that in my colleague's riding either. We know that only 3% of Canadians contribute the maximum. When the previous government raised the TFSA limit to \$11,000, who did it think would benefit?

The reason I got into politics was to stand up for those who were neglected by the previous government, and that is exactly what the Minister of Finance is doing, along with our government, through the national housing strategy, which was unveiled yesterday, through the Canada child benefit, and through support for low-income workers, as I mentioned in my speech.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we all know in the House that being a parliamentary secretary is largely a thankless job. We have seen in evident displays that the poor parliamentary secretary has been forced in the term of his speech to regurgitate talking points for the Prime Minister's Office and completely ignore the issue before us by simply going over government policy of which we are all very well aware.

I am the father of five-year-old twin daughters, and I have noticed two things with my kids. When the subject matter gets difficult for them, they try to change the topic. Second, when I accuse them of doing something wrong, they say, "My sister did it, so it must be okay".

I would like to know from the parliamentary secretary if his government members will stand in the House today, or in the near future, show some leadership to Canadians, take responsibility, admit they have done something wrong with this, own up to it, solve the problem, and stop blaming the previous government for mistakes. We have reached a statute of limitations. We are over the halfway mark of the government's term. I am still waiting for them to stand in the House to show that leadership, that maturity that Canadians demand of their government, and admit there is a problem that they are going to fix.

• (1110)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, it is important to mention that we are not saying that anyone's sister has done it and so it is okay. What we are saying is that the Ethics Commissioner, in full knowledge of the finance minister's situation, set the path to follow for the finance minister when he first got to Ottawa, as he has worked with her from the very beginning. This is what I have been saying. He has followed the recommendations and has put in place the conflict of interest screen, which she deemed to be the best measure of compliance. The Ethics Commissioner is the institution in charge of making sure that the integrity of Parliament is protected and respected, which is why the finance minister has worked and will work with the Ethics Commissioner.

Business of Supply

As far as talking points are concerned, for me, the families that I represent in my riding, and the food banks that I have visited, the Canada child benefit is in no way, shape, or form a talking point. It represents—

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: That is not the subject of today.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I have touched on the motion that we are discussing today. I have talked about the actions of the finance minister with the Ethics Commissioner. However, I find it offensive when members say that this is a talking point, because for me when I was a kid and the families I represent, this is not a talking point. It is more money at the end of the month and represents a 40% reduction in child poverty. This is something that the NDP should be proud of and should applaud.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is quite simple. If everything is all sunshine and full of integrity with the finance minister, then why did the Ethics Commissioner fine the finance minister \$200 for not fully disclosing his assets, and why did she find enough evidence to open up an investigation about a conflict of interest with Bill C-27?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the property in France in response to an earlier question from the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I said that the property had been disclosed to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The administrative error had to do with the corporate entity that owns it. The Minister of Finance worked with the Ethics Commissioner, as he has always done. The commissioner is conducting an examination of Bill C-27, not an investigation.

The Minister of Finance continues to work with the Ethics Commissioner, as he has always done. That is the right thing to do because the Ethics Commissioner is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of Parliament. We have confidence in the Ethics Commissioner's work, which involves telling parliamentarians, when they arrive in Ottawa to take on their responsibilities as a minister, parliamentary secretary, or MP, what to do to ensure that they are in compliance with the rules governing us and the House. That is what the Minister of Finance did.

In my speech, I was very proud to talk about everything the Minister of Finance has done for the Canadian economy and for Canadians from all walks of life. I think that our government has done a lot of good. That is why I got into politics.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to stay on point, and I will talk about sunshine and a couple of the infected policies from the previous government that the Minister of Finance has disinfected over the last two years.

Could the hon. parliamentary secretary develop a little more on some of the infected policies that the Minister of Finance has disinfected with his sunshine over the last two years?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question.

One of the first things that the finance minister said—as interest rates were low, as the Canadian economy had been sluggish for too long, as we were debating whether we were in or heading into a recession—was that we would invest in infrastructure, and we have pledged \$180 billion over 12 years.

He also mentioned that we would jumpstart and boost the Canada child benefit to grow our economy, which is the approach, I would point out to my hon. colleague, that not only was the right thing to do but that economists around the world said was something countries like Canada should do. Christine Lagarde from the IMF said that this approach should “go viral”. This has created growth for the Canadian economy, it has created opportunities for Canadians, and it has contributed to reducing social inequalities, which we have seen grow in Canada for too long.

This is the focus of my engagement in politics and the reason I am proud to serve alongside the finance minister and in this government after the decade when we saw Conservatives, for instance, double the TFSA limit—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Joël Lightbound: They say hear, hear, but the guy who invented the TFSA said this was ludicrous and would put the state in a fiscal straightjacket. At the time, that was what the Conservatives wanted, because they do not want the state to make sure that inequalities are not on the rise, or provide for the essential services that Canadians need. They think that no government is good government, which is why a fiscal straightjacket was good enough. Joe Oliver at the time said it was a problem for “...Stephen Harper's granddaughter” to solve. We are not leaving any problem for anybody's granddaughter or grandson to solve.

• (1115)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be splitting my time with my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Let us start where we need to start, which is at the beginning.

[*Translation*]

Let us begin with the motion moved by the member for Carleton:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that “sunshine is the best disinfectant”; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies....

This kind of thing happens because a loophole in the Conflict of Interest Act makes it possible for the minister not to be considered in conflict of interest if he holds his shares in a private numbered corporation, which is what the ultra-rich do. However, let us consider this statement by the Prime Minister about his ministers:

...the Ethical Guidelines...apply to you and your staff. As noted in the Guidelines, you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.

It is bizarre that we should have to spend the day on a debate to help the Liberals keep a Liberal promise. That is our intention, and this is an opportunity for the Liberals and the Minister of Finance in particular to save their reputation.

Business of Supply

We are simply asking the minister to keep the promise that he and the Prime Minister made to all Canadians to ensure that his private affairs can bear the closest public scrutiny.

[English]

We are spending the entire day trying to help Liberals out. It is not an easy thing to do sometimes, because it is correcting bad behaviour. We do not have to do it once, but over and over again, because there is a certain amount of recidivism when we are talking about Liberals and the Liberal culture when it comes to ethics.

Canadians have seen this movie before. The Liberals are entitled to their entitlements. The concern I have is that this finance minister does not even understand that he has done something wrong. It is not just that he has done something wrong with the introduction of a bill that personally helped him and his company, but it is that he does not see any problem with that.

Not only is the behaviour itself bad—the decisions that were made initially not just by the finance minister but by the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister's staff—in breaking faith with Canadians, but after that faith was broken, and it was revealed publicly, the finance minister stands up day after day and asks what the problem is. He is just under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner, he has already had to pay a fine for his French villa, and he says he is moving on; he has no problem here, and why should anybody else?

Having faith in the finance minister is important for Parliament and important for all Canadians, because it is such a powerful position. I think it is important to read out the promise that we are trying to help the Liberals keep today, because it is a promise that the Prime Minister himself made. He came in on a white stallion of integrity and was going to bring forth a new era in Canadian politics and integrity. Here is what the Prime Minister told Canadians, and demanded of all of his ministers, including the finance minister:

...you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.

We found out that the finance minister's shares in Morneau Shepell totalled, depending on the date, some \$32 million, and when he eventually sold them, they were worth between \$6 million and \$12 million more. Liberals talk about the personal sacrifices the finance minister has made, but I would love to make a personal sacrifice for which I gained \$6 million to \$12 million. Most Canadians would love the idea of that being the definition of personal sacrifice: being forced under public pressure to make \$12 million profit. I am sorry if we do not hand out Kleenex for the tears that Canadians are shedding for the finance minister, who may have just cleared between \$6 million and \$12 million profit. It is tough to be him, I guess.

• (1120)

The notion is this, though. It only came to light because journalists dug through records to find out that he was still controlling these shares. They were in a numbered company in Alberta. There is a loophole in the ethics code that has never been exploited before, to my knowledge, because no one thought of it, I guess, where, if he took the shares he owned in Morneau Shepell and simply moved them into a numbered company in Alberta, even though all of the

profits would still eventually go to him, and him alone, that was no longer considered a conflict of interest. That is a shell game.

Canadians sitting back and watching this ask who made the money, and we say he did. That seems like a conflict of interest, because he introduced Bill C-27 that directly helped out Morneau Shepell, in which he still had tens of millions of dollars of shares. That seems wrong. If the health minister introduced a bill while still owning pharmaceutical shares worth tens of millions of dollars that helped out that pharmaceutical company, we would scream foul. The finance minister gets up day after day and says the opposition is obsessed with him. He is under a conflict of interest investigation.

It was revealed only after the media dug into his personal accounts, in ways that they could, to find out about the French villa that was in a numbered company that he forgot about. It was only because the media dug into public and semi-private records that they found out he was still controlling shares in Morneau Shepell worth millions of dollars while regulating the pension industry. Hold that thought for a moment. He worked in the pension industry, his company made profits in the pension industry, and he moved into public life to serve the public. He maintains millions of dollars of shares in a pension company while being the regulator of the pension industry, and the finance minister does not see a potential conflict of interest.

Today, we have a motion on which the entire day in the House will be spent asking the Liberals to simply do this: to keep their promise about public scrutiny. It does not end with the Morneau Shepell Bill C-27 affair. We know the finance minister has at least five other numbered companies, the contents of which we know nothing about. The very first test he faced on whether we should trust him or not was around introducing Bill C-27. He failed the test. The Ethics Commissioner is now investigating him because he failed that test. She believes there is enough evidence to launch that investigation.

When it was revealed that the finance minister was going under this investigation, his office tried to spin it and say it was not an investigation, that it was just an examination. That is what his office said. Lo and behold, we found out there is no difference, because in the ethics act the only word for it is “examination”. Liberals are in a hole and they just keep on digging. In fact, I think they went out and bought a bigger shovel.

Never mind that Morneau Shepell, as revealed through an access to information request, still maintains 171 contracts with the federal government. It has contracts valued at \$53 million with the federal government while the finance minister maintains shares in Morneau Shepell. It is a minefield of conflicts of interest all over the place, in every decision he is making. One would have thought that if he wanted to keep his promise, knowing all of his personal affairs would bear the fullest public scrutiny, he would have divested.

Business of Supply

That a cabinet minister sitting in Donald Trump's cabinet cannot do what this finance minister has done should cause Canadians some alarm. People in cabinet working for the President of the United States, even the current president, have to divest themselves of their interests. Otherwise, they will run into conflicts of interest almost every day. The finance minister still has not come clean. He has not revealed to Canadians what he owns or what his interests are. He says we should trust him, he is a good guy. He may be a good guy, but he is doing bad things.

Doing the right thing after getting caught is not exactly the same as doing the right thing, is it? One does not exactly build up trust by saying that now that he has been caught, he will do this, this, and this. The finance minister needs confidence, not just of the Prime Minister but of all Canadians. If he wants to regain confidence, this would all go away, if he just does this. The only person who can make this story end is the finance minister himself, who simply has to keep his promise that he and the Prime Minister made to all Canadians, to tell us what he owns and how he owns it so that Canadians can judge, because that is who we work for.

• (1125)

We all in this place work for the Canadians who sent us here. The finance minister promised that he would reveal what he owns and how he owns it. He, to this day, has not done that. The only record that we have is his dealing with a pension bill that would directly help out his company. Only after he got caught did he beget generosity toward charities and donate the profits, and we still do not even know how he did that and if he is getting a tax receipt for that. I ask the Liberals to come now, join with us, come into the light, let the sun shine in, and tell us what he owns and how he owns it.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual the member adds to the debate; he adds more information but also an interesting perspective.

I want him to reflect on this. What we are going to hear from the members of Parliament on the Liberal side of the House today will be speeches of justification. They will say that everything is okay; the fine is okay, and the behaviour of the Minister of Finance for the past two years is just okay because look at how well the economy is doing and look at all these wonderful social programs, and that is okay. Then the Minister of Finance swept some of those bread crumbs off of the table into his pocket. I would like the member to reflect on that and whether it is okay to justify such behaviour in the House and to bring the entire political class and every single member of Parliament in this House into disrepute because of that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, where I come from, north-western British Columbia, our word is our bond. If people want to be in business and if they want to be a good member of the community, how they conduct themselves and the promises they make matter because people have to judge them on that and have that only to judge them on.

The finance minister and all ministers in this cabinet made a promise to Canadians when they swore an oath and came into cabinet that they would reveal what they owned and how they owned it. That is exactly the commitment that is in his mandate letter. Liberals talk about mandate letters all the time. They probably will not talk about this part of the mandate letter today. I would challenge, invite, and encourage a Liberal today to talk about that

promise about full public disclosure. If the Liberals believe that is true, if they believe those mandate letters matter at all, and if they believe their words matter at all then they should be the ones, more than anybody else, encouraging the finance minister to come forward and tell us what he owns because his word matters. Canadians need to be able to trust somebody who runs a \$330-billion budget of somebody else's money each and every year.

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could thank my hon. colleague, whom I know, for his comments this morning. It is his presentation and all of the rhetoric that informs it that debase this place. The notion that the finance minister got into politics for any reason other than to help the people of his community, to help the people of this country, and to do the hard work that is necessary to achieve those objectives is absolutely ludicrous. It is what lowers the quality of debate in this House. My hon. colleague knows better because he knows the finance minister and he works with him in collaboration, so to hear him string together the tissues of nonsense that we have had to endure over the last couple of months is regrettable.

The finance minister, as has been pointed out on numerous occasions, has worked with the Ethics Commissioner. He will continue to do so as part of the due diligence of meeting the high standards of integrity and ethics that are demanded by the people.

What I want to know is whether the hon. member is prepared to restore the level of debate that is becoming of politics and is becoming of the priorities that matter to Canadians. When is the member going to talk about the economy? Why does he not join us on a debate on national housing? Let us hear that debate come back to this House.

• (1130)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the debate today is about those standards and those ethical standards that the finance minister committed to. Allow me to finish.

The finance minister said to all Canadians that he would disclose his personal holdings to the fullest public scrutiny. That is what he promised. In order for him to do his work that my friend talks about, the minister needs to have the trust of Canadians. He has still not kept his promise. The member talked about debasing and rhetoric. There is nothing I said today that is not fact. The minister owned the shares and, correct me if I am wrong, he let it be known to my friend and to others in the Liberal Party that he put those in a blind trust. Morneau Shepell thought those were in a blind trust. Only because journalists found out that they were not, did we find out that this was not true. He had allowed a lie to exist for two years and now he says, "trust me, I am a good guy".

Business of Supply

I actually do not know the finance minister, to correct my friend. I have never had a conversation with him. He may be the nicest guy in the world. It does not matter. Does he understand that conduct is what matters and promises are what matter? He broke his promise and continues to break it each and every day when he hides his personal assets. He promised and the entire government promised, when they stepped into cabinet, full public disclosure of their personal assets. My friend knows this to be true because it is in the mandate letters; I will send him a copy. The finance minister still has not done it; the member knows that to be true. He can call that rhetoric if he wants, but he knows those are facts.

Any time he wants to come back at me with some facts, I would welcome the debate because that is what raises the tone and level of debate in this House, not just spitting out tissues of facts. These are all facts I stated. I would welcome the member to join the debate on facts.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know this is going to be a difficult day for my Liberal colleagues because this is the role of Parliament and sometimes we have to discuss things that they do not want us to talk about.

There are two parts to the Conservatives' motion today. The first part calls upon the House to agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, that "sunshine is the best disinfectant". I believe he was responding to a question from my hon. colleague from Hochelaga. This is a very widely known proverb, but the origins are less well known. The proverb is actually derived from the quote, "sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants" which is attributed to Louis Brandeis, an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

In 1914, he published a series of essays under the title *Other People's Money and How the Bankers Use It*, in which he harshly criticized investment bankers who control large amounts of money deposited in their banks by middle-class people, the very people who will be harmed if Bill C-27 is passed.

The quote in question is found in chapter 5, "What publicity can do". It was used in support of regulation to disclosure obligations, which is precisely what we are trying to accomplish in the House today. There is a delicious sort of irony here. The Liberal Prime Minister, who leads a party and a government that have traditionally been very friendly to Canada's big banks, who refused to do anything to tackle their business practices, including how they sell their financial products and the exorbitant fees they levy as service charges on middle-class Canadians, this same Prime Minister has unwittingly quoted a man who is very harshly critical of those same banks.

We know Morneau Shepell is getting quite concerned by all of the bad press it is receiving. It has basically become a household name in Canadian political discourse now. It has actually reached out to friends in the *Financial Post*. Yesterday it published an article in which it reported that Morneau Shepell rejects the suggestion that Bill C-27 would generate a flood of business for it, because guess what? There are many suppliers of pension services and the added business would not at all be significant. The article then relies on the fact that Morneau Shepell shares actually dipped in value a few

weeks after Bill C-27 was introduced, as if this made it all okay for the finance minister to have owned shares in it in the first place because he would have lost some money.

That is really all the article can do as a defence because it then proceeds to do a hit job on the union leaders who are, surprise, surprise, going out and standing up for their members in advocating against the very thing that Bill C-27 is trying to do. That is really the only defence possible because this is an indefensible situation that we are in.

I find it very helpful for members in this place and for my constituents in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford to really go to the crux of the matter. It has to do with a very important piece of federal legislation, the Conflict of Interest Act. I will read, starting with section 4:

For the purposes of this Act, a public office holder is in a conflict of interest when he or she exercises an official power, duty or function that provides an opportunity to further his or her private interests or those of his or her relatives...

It also says under section 5 that:

Every public office holder shall arrange his or her private affairs in a manner that will prevent the public office holder from being in a conflict of interest.

It is all spelled out quite clearly under the legislation and it is unfortunate that members on the government side seem to have some trouble understanding why we are debating this very issue today. The government's publication "An Open and Accountable Government" states quite clearly that:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must act with honesty and uphold the highest ethical standards so that public confidence and trust in the integrity and impartiality of government are maintained and enhanced.

Moreover, they have an obligation to perform their official duties and arrange their private affairs in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny. This obligation is not fully discharged merely by acting within the law.

● (1135)

Those are not my words; those are the government's words. The Liberals can rely on the defence that they are complying with the commissioner and the act, but they are ignoring the fact the spirit of the law has been completely trampled upon.

We are all very well aware of the Prime Minister's mandate letters to each of his ministers, in which these tenets were upheld and even pushed.

Because of the opposition's line of questioning during question period and by bringing forward this motion today, some Liberals accuse members of the opposition of launching personal attacks. That is a complete deflection from the issue at hand. The role of Parliament, one of its most important roles, is to hold government to account.

I want to refer to a quote from the great Stanley Knowles, who gave a great speech to the Empire Club in 1957. He said:

The Parliament of this country, elected by free men and women on the basis of free discussions which cannot be abrogated, is not just a club of good fellows who ought to do the nation's business in the shortest...time and with the least possible contention; rather it is a body which should examine every proposal...to make sure that it is in the country's best interest; it is a body in which attention should be drawn to proposals that ought to be made but which are often overlooked, unless an election is just around the corner; it is a body which should scrutinize expenditures and inquire into the administration of public affairs to make sure that fairness, justice and equity are maintained.

Business of Supply

I will let that hang in the air for a moment. That is precisely what we are doing today.

We operate by a system of responsible government, where the executive branch of the Liberal government sits within the legislature, and it can only continue to do its function with the support of the legislature. It is responsible to us, and we hold lines of inquiry to ensure that ministers of the crown are living up to their fullest obligations possible. This is a very legitimate line of questioning and the government is deflecting by going over all the great things it has been doing. If the government is so happy with those great things, I invite a minister of the crown to move the appropriate motion so we can have that debate on a different day. The motion before us today is what we are debating, and it goes directly to the finance minister's conduct.

I believe my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley mentioned that this was a time when both the finance minister and Prime Minister were under investigation. The very fact that they engaged in activities that led to the investigations in the first place should be very troubling.

I want to refer all hon. members from the government's side to the second part of the motion before us today, which reads, “and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.”

When we ask questions of the government, we see a lot of glum faces on Liberal backbenchers as they have to listen to this finance minister day after day try to defend the indefensible. They may not see it from their point of view, but in the opposition we see the reactions of the Liberals. They know this is a tough position to defend.

I would like to end with a reference to “sunny ways”. The Liberal leader Wilfrid Laurier proposed that a diplomatic sunny way would work better, and he used an illustration of Aesop's fable in which the sun and the wind held a contest to see who could remove a traveller's coat. The sun's warm rays proved more effective to the wind's bluster. If the Liberals truly believe in sunlight being the best disinfectant, I call upon them to use their sunny ways to remove the finance minister's coat of silence so we, as the people's representatives, can truly have confidence in his role.

• (1140)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member something that has been touched upon a number of times in debate today; that perhaps the finance minister is incapable of recognizing his ethical responsibilities. That is why he is in a conflict situation.

We know the finance minister was born into great wealth and he married into great wealth. He has lived a life in a rarified atmosphere to which the overwhelming majority of Canadians cannot relate. The company which bears his name, Morneau Shepell, specializes, among other things, in offshore tax avoidance. One of the family yachts, the motor vessel “Playpen”, does not fly the Canadian flag. It is registered in the Marshall Islands to avoid the obligations, responsibilities, and laws to which most recreational boat owners in Canada submit themselves.

Does my colleague believe the finance minister simply believes himself to be above the responsibilities to which all the members in the House submit themselves, with a notable exception being the Prime Minister?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, for everyone who enters public life, it sometime can seem like quite a jolt to the system. I come from the other end of the spectrum. I did not come from an area of great wealth. When I entered office and was told of my obligations, I found them pretty easy to follow. Whenever I had a question, I had people around me who were much more knowledgeable and could fill in the blanks.

I am very surprised that the finance minister, with all of his political staff, the entire staff of the Prime Minister's office, and Finance Canada at their disposal, missed the fact that this could be problem. I do not see how it is possible. Perhaps the minister is not used to the fact that disclosure is an integral part of public life. I think he is well aware of it now. That is why we call upon him to honour the spirit of what we are trying to get to today.

We want to know that during his time as finance minister he was not in a conflict of interest, so he may continue his role to bear to the utmost possible scrutiny.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way and the Minister of Finance have something in common, as all of us do. Once we are elected, we have an obligation to report our assets to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Each and everyone of us has that responsibility. One of the reasons we do that is because at times this chamber becomes very partisan.

To ensure Canadians are best served with respect to the issue of conflict of interest, we have an independent Ethics Commissioner. The member would have disclosed his assets, whatever they might be. I will not be critical of one member of Parliament over another because someone may have more assets than another, but the principle is the same.

Why does the member believe the rules we have been operating under for over 10 years are not good enough today? If he believes that, why do the NDP not move a motion to change those rules?

• (1145)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I believe we did that at the ethics committee. However, I will note that there is a small difference between me and the finance minister. I do not regulate companies that are in control of the nation's finances.

This is about living up to the letter of the law. We have evidence before us that while the finance minister was involved in the pension industry, he held shares in a company that he regulated, and then introduced a bill which could benefit that company and the shares he held in it. I have constituents who right away would see that as a conflict of interest. The fact that this is an ethical blind spot for the Liberals remains very troubling to me and to many Canadians.

Business of Supply

We are calling upon the the finance minister to do the right thing, show some leadership, disclose his financial obligations, so he may continue in his role without this cloud of suspicion hanging over him.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

Trust is earned when actions meet words. It is unfortunate that today we are here in the House having to call out the finance minister for breaking the trust of Canadians.

The Prime Minister and the finance minister arguably are the two most important, powerful officials in government. We as parliamentarians and, more important, Canadians must be able to trust that they will act in the public interest rather than in their own private interest. As the Prime Minister has said “sunshine is the best disinfectant”. Therefore, let us lift up the rug, throw open the doors, and reveal what is in all those numbered companies the finance minister has set up in various provinces.

The Liberals clearly are not very comfortable talking about this topic. Either at town halls or through correspondence and phone calls, they have had to defend the bad life decisions the minister has made.

For folks at home wondering why we are having this debate, it is because Canada is not a backward country where elected officials get to live off the largesse of the office they hold. When the actions of a minister of the crown are in dispute, the minister has a moral duty to provide the information needed to uphold the trust bestowed unto him or her by Canadians, but also to the overall institution.

Parliament is bigger than any one minister. Regardless of one's self-appointed importance, the reputation of all of us is at risk due to the mistakes of one individual, particularly when the circumstances of the incident are as serious as this. Politicians should not personally benefit from the office they hold. Ministers of the crown are fairly compensated for the work they do on behalf of Canadians. They do not need to set up numbered companies that are designed in such a manner as to avoid giving up control of their assets.

We are here because the Minister of Finance did not live up to his mandate letter. To quote the mandate letter from the Prime Minister, it said the following:

...you.... must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.

We are here because the minister thought, in some twisted world, that he could have his cake and eat it too. His actions in this ethical quagmire do not live up to the standards to which ministers of the crown should aspire. The Minister of Finance has clearly broken the spirit of the conflict of interest rules. There is no ambiguity about that. He said that he was going to put his assets in a blind trust, but conveniently did not. Regardless of whatever lame excuse or spin the government tries to use today to defend the minister, it does not pass the smell test. No one is buying it.

His approvals ratings have dramatically dropped and the Liberals' narrative of fighting for the middle class is not even believed on the

pages of the *Toronto Star* anymore. We know a Liberal minister is in trouble when the *Toronto Star* starts criticizing his or her behaviour.

This bad news is taking a toll on the minister's public approval. According to a new poll, he is now the most negatively received member of the Prime Minister's cabinet. Forty-six per cent of those who knew of him gave the finance minister the thumbs down, while 23% said that he had done a good job in his position so far.

For the benefit of all members, those numbers are even lower than President Trump's approval in the United States. Furthermore, if the finance minister continues to drag the government down with him, he will soon find himself joining his former colleagues John McCallum and Stéphane Dion doing the embassy cocktail circuit with the prefix “His Excellency” added to his to business card.

That is where we find ourselves today. The ethical pyramid that has been constructed has come crashing down and the Minister of Finance has no one to blame for this but himself. Time and again, he has avoided doing the right thing, which is, for a start, to apologize.

For two years, the finance minister held shares worth approximately \$20 million in Morneau Shepell, a company he regulates. He held these shares outside of a blind trust, despite his own colleagues believing his shares were in a blind trust.

• (1150)

Right after being sworn in as finance minister he spoke to the CBC. It was in that interview where he said, “I've resigned my position as chair of the firm that I was chair of before. I expect that all my assets will go into a blind trust.” Well, it turns out that this did not happen. His assets were not placed in a blind trust, but were set up in an elaborate way that still allowed him to control them in a numbered company in Alberta. Only after it was revealed that the finance minister was not holding his assets in a blind trust did he acknowledge his wrongdoing and agree to sell those assets. He continues to hold several numbered companies, but the assets held within those companies are not publicly known.

While he held these shares, the finance minister also introduced Bill C-27, which would create targeted benefit pension plans. We also know that benefit pension plans are a highly specialized product offered by Morneau Shepell. In this regard, it has just been announced that the Ethics Commissioner has launched an investigation into the minister's involvement with Bill C-27, particularly as his shares in Morneau Shepell rose in value after the legislation was announced.

These are the facts that the Liberal member for Eglinton—Lawrence just called “tissues of nonsense”. These costly mistakes have tarnished the minister's reputation and, from media reports, will end up costing him roughly \$5 million dollars after his assets are divested.

For someone who is as educated and successful as he is, it boggles the mind how he could have thought his actions were ethical. Even the most casual political observer would have recognized that the Minister of Finance should not have control over his assets, which would surely be impacted by the decisions he would make in office.

Business of Supply

In this debate today we will ask the finance minister to reveal all of the assets he has bought, sold, or held within all of his private companies or trust funds since being sworn in. We are calling for this information to be revealed to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

Now the Liberals may try to shrug this off and pretend this debate is not happening. In fact, I suspect that many will not even try to defend the finance minister's ethical lapses. They know they cannot defend the indefensible. They can bob and weave during question period and avoid answering the tough questions, but if they tried for one moment to do this with their constituents back home, the latter's wrath and fury would surely be quick to follow.

Today, many members will lay out the argument why this motion should pass. Members will hear why the Minister of Finance should do the right thing and begin the process of revealing what he has bought and sold since he became the finance minister. Then and only then can we be sure that he did not personally financially gain from the decisions he has made while in office.

To my friends in the Liberal Party, this is their chance to stand up and demand better from those who govern us. Regardless of political stripe, I think we can all admit that the Minister of Finance has been less than forthcoming with Canadians. If the shoes were on the other feet, many of the MPs who sit across from us today would be in an uproar over what has transpired over these past two years. From secret villas to numbered companies to legislation that will financially benefit the minister's bank account, this paints a very troubling picture.

I call on every MP to demand better. Demand that the Prime Minister be held to his word. Demand that ministers be held to a higher standard than finding a loophole and then proclaiming their innocence.

Canadians are smarter than to fall for the claptrap that is far too often peddled. We know in our guts that what has become known is not only morally unacceptable, but also very clearly in breach of the law. Trust takes years to build, seconds to break, and forever to repair.

The very least the finance minister could do is to be transparent and forthcoming with Canadians.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brandon—Souris for his speech.

Knowing him to be a good and sensible man, I wonder if he does not find it sad to see the number of government MPs, or lack thereof, here in the House. We are currently talking about their Minister of Finance and, if I am not mistaken, I see three Liberal MPs. No, there are not even three, there are only two. That is great—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would remind the hon. member that he ought not to make reference to the absence or presence of other members in the House.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for making what I felt was a harmless comment on the government's lack of interest in today's debate.

It is really sad, because these same people kept saying that they were going to do politics differently. They kept saying that they would be the sunshine to disinfect the wounds of a government that was disconnected from the public.

Today, we can plainly see that the Minister of Finance is not at all concerned about all the public cynicism. That is probably what is doing the most damage. Whether his accounts grew by \$2 million or \$12 million, the worst thing he did was dampen the public's enthusiasm and feed their cynicism.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on this. I know his work is important to him. We find it demoralizing when people say that they have no use for politics, the Minister of Finance, or the very system itself.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is quite right. The government wants to talk about sunny ways, but there is a huge cloud hanging over the whole government these days.

Canadians know about it, and we hear about it every day in phone calls, emails, and messages from them. Maybe it will turn into a thunderstorm. There have been a lot of lightning strikes over there in regard to some of the efforts by the minister to defuse some of the obvious things I cited today, which he has been charged with, found guilty of, and paid a fine for.

There is a huge vacuous absence of policy by the government now, which is trying to do things that will happen some decades down the road. It is even the case in the debate today. I was listening to it in my office before I came to give my speech. I heard my hon. colleague from York—Simcoe trying to bring some relevance to the House in response to some of the speeches by the Liberals trying to defend the minister today. The minister's name, or the whole situation, never even entered into the discussion of the Liberals. It proves they are embarrassed by this situation the finance minister has gotten them into. It is also a fact that he is not even able to honest with his own Prime Minister.

As I said in my speech, these are the two most important people in government. Who can Canadians trust?

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I posed a question regarding former Prime Minister Stephen Harper to the member who introduced the motion we are debating today.

Canadians need to be aware that the opposition parties are happily working together on this particular issue. What they are implying and trying to say is that Stephen Harper's rules, the same rules that we live by, are not good enough. In fact, all 338 members of Parliament are expected to abide the very same rules that Stephen Harper had to abide by.

Business of Supply

We have seen an extreme politicization of this issue. Both opposition parties are working hand in hand on the issue. Does my colleague across the way recognize that it is important for us to have confidence in the Ethics Commissioner's office? We on this side of the House do. Does the Conservative Party have confidence in the Ethics Commissioner's office?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member for Winnipeg North raised that issue, because I have the utmost confidence in the Ethics Commissioner's office. I do not have any confidence in Minister of Finance's ethics in regard to what I talked about in my speech today, including the things he has already paid a fine for.

One thing about Stephen Harper we can be sure about is that he left a surplus for the Canadian public, and the Liberal government is running \$30 billion deficits every year. The Liberals never talk about the fact that he reduced the debt, never mind the deficit by \$30 billion in his first two years in government, before the 2008 recession hit.

The member can stand up and talk about rules all he wants, but what about accountability? If he wants to talk about the opposition working together, then, yes, we are. Why would we not? This is one of the most unethical situations I have ever seen in government, and I have been in it for 17 or 18 years now. I feel strongly that we are not only working together as the opposition, but are working with Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in Beauport—Limoilou are listening to us right now, and I want to say hello to them.

Our political system is a parliamentary democracy. I believe that it is the best system in the world, and I think all members of the House would agree.

In this system, ministerial responsibility is the most important thing we carry out every day, primarily in question period and through opposition days like today. Ministerial responsibility was acquired as a result of long debates and long military campaigns.

Les Patriotes were not all French Canadians; they included some English Canadians, too. They fought in the 1820s and 1830s to obtain ministerial responsibility, which the British monarchy and British Parliament granted us with the Act of Union, creating a united Canada in 1841.

What we are doing today with our opposition day is exercising that ministerial responsibility and ensuring that it is fulfilled. One of the ways this is done is through investigative journalism, which is very important and which we on this side of the House take very seriously. In fact, with the help of its sponsor here, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, a senator in the other place managed to get a bill passed that provides greater protection to whistleblowers and the confidential sources of investigative journalism.

What have investigative journalists discovered in recent months? The Minister of Finance did three things, or overlooked three things, or made three serious mistakes.

Need we remind members that the finance minister is second in command in the Government of Canada. He is second in command not because he is more important than other ministers, but it can still be argued that a country's finances are critical given their implications for education, health, and the well-being of Canadians. For that reason, the position of finance minister is held in high regard and the incumbent must do everything possible to ensure that Canadians' confidence in the minister is never in doubt or undermined.

Unfortunately, the three things that the finance minister did in two years, which were reported by investigative journalists in recent months, have slowly and surely undermined Canadians' confidence in the minister.

In my view, the attitude, behaviour, and actions of all members in their day-to-day activities both inside and outside the House must always be guided by three principles: a sense of duty, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of honour.

I urge my Liberal colleagues to listen carefully. The Minister of Finance, like all of us, had the solemn, legal duty to disclose his assets to the Ethics Commissioner right away. He had six months to do so, using a form that is pretty easy to fill out. It may have been more difficult for him, since he has so many assets. However, he had a duty to disclose all of his assets, in black and white, clearly and openly, leaving no doubt and leaving nothing out. He had a duty, and he did not properly fulfill it. I will get back to this and explain why.

The minister also had the responsibility, and still does today, to inform the Ethics Commissioner of any changes to his personal situation throughout his term. Such changes would include a new acquisition, a boat in the Bahamas, or, who knows, a second villa in France.

● (1205)

As a member of Parliament, I receive updates from the Ethics Commissioner reminding me of my responsibility and duty to disclose any new assets, throughout my term. For example, I recently declared that I purchased a home for my lovely little family; I was happy to do so. All members of Parliament have this responsibility.

In my opinion, however, honour is even more important than duty or responsibility. When members of Parliament are guided by a sense of honour, their actions are naturally guided by a sense of duty and responsibility. The Minister of Finance failed in his duty and his responsibility as an elected official, minister, and member of Cabinet over the past two years, and I will talk about this failure in a few seconds. Unfortunately for him and for this government, he sullied his honour.

First, two years ago, when he was made to fill out the much-discussed form disclosing his assets, interests, and so on to the Ethics Commissioner, he forgot, nay, omitted to declare a company incorporated in France that owns a luxurious villa in Provence in the south of France. I imagine it is very luxurious and quite expensive. That is unbelievable.

Business of Supply

I have here a public notice of penalty issued under the authority of the Conflict of Interest Act. This is not a joke. These are not allegations or opposition attacks. This is fact. The Ethics Commissioner issued a penalty just a few weeks ago and fined the Minister of Finance \$200 for violating paragraphs 22(2)(a) and 22(2)(d) of the Conflict of Interest Act by failing to include in a confidential report a corporation established in France and an estimate of its value and, crucially, by failing to include in the report his directorship in that corporation. This is serious business.

The Minister of Finance, an important businessman from Bay Street in Toronto who manages a huge family business, somehow forgot to report that asset in France, although he claims it was just an administrative oversight. That is a first. This actually happened; he paid the fine. He was caught and had to face the music, although only administratively. Of course, these are not criminal charges. That was his first dereliction of duty and breach of Canadian laws, the first stain on his reputation, and the first thing that shook Canadians' confidence in him.

On top of that, he did not put his shares in Morneau Shepell, worth \$20 million, in a blind trust. He hid them in a numbered company in Alberta and has made millions on them over the past two years. Thank goodness he donated it to charity. It was the least he could do, but he still has not apologized and he refuses to talk about the fact that he has been violating the spirit of the law over the past year.

Lastly, he is once again being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner regarding a conflict of interest, because he introduced Bill C-27, which makes changes to pension plans and will benefit the family business started by his father. He is therefore in a direct conflict of interest, he failed in his duty and his responsibilities, and his honour is besmirched.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the member's dissertation, and I have several concerns.

First, this gives me an opportunity to say that I have enjoyed working with my colleague the Minister of Finance, and I have absolutely no reason to doubt any of his decisions or his integrity on any issue. I am pleased to call him a colleague. I am pleased to call him an hon. member.

Second, I do have a concern both with the motion today and with the member's speech. I am hearing specious arguments and some rather outrageous claims that are not based on fact. I know that is the opposition's role, and I have been in opposition and I understand that, but what I am looking for today is very clear. Does the member support the current rules, which I believe have been followed completely by the Minister of Finance, or is the member actually saying that the rules fall short? If they fall short, is he or his party actually suggesting some changes to our conflict of interest guidelines, and how could he make a positive contribution to this debate?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I mean, the facts could not be clearer. The minister has not divulged to the Ethics Commissioner his holdings and the value of his holdings; for example, the villa in France. He has not divulged this. He did not say that he had, up until

last month, \$20 million worth of shares in Morneau Shepell hiding in a numbered company in Alberta. He did not say that in the past months when he was putting together a proposed law that would directly benefit three specialized enterprises or companies that work for pension plans in Canada, one being Morneau Shepell, which he owned until he was minister.

The member said that there are no facts, but there are facts. There was a penalty of \$200 from the Ethics Commissioner. It is significant.

• (1215)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals across the way talk about going by the rules, hiding behind the Ethics Commissioner.

I used to sit on the Environmental Appeal Board in British Columbia and the Forest Appeals Commission. When I took on those roles, I was sent off to a kind of judging school for a week. We had judges come in and tell us how to act in those hearings, because we were essentially acting as judges. One of the really important parts of that training was to recognize when we were in a conflict of interest. I remember the judge telling us that the general rule or legal test for a conflict of interest that we had to go by was called something like the sidewalk smell test—I forget the exact name—where if we walked up to someone on the sidewalk and explained the situation, they would say whether there was a conflict of interest.

I would like the member to comment on that and whether, if he walked up to people on the sidewalk in Canada and said that we have a finance minister who holds shares in a company of his own, which is benefiting from his own decisions, that would be a conflict of interest.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, yes, that is the case. I can confirm for the hon. member that last week, when we were all in our ridings, I met many constituents who all told me that it is outrageous, and that it is even more outrageous to see the Minister of Finance acting as if nothing was outrageous.

There is a clear conflict of interest here, and we should always remind Canadians that the Prime Minister sent a mandate letter to each minister stating in the first paragraph that not only did he want them to follow precisely each article of the law, and most concerning is this one today of the Ethics Commissioner, but he said to go above and beyond the spirit of the law. Well, I can say that the minister went above and beyond physically by putting all his shares in a hiding company in Alberta. He has put together an action that brings a great distrust of the government from the Canadian people. As the opposition, we have the duty, the responsibility, and the honour to hold the minister to account.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will pick up on the answer that my colleague just provided. When I sat in opposition, the Harper government made the decision to virtually kill the Canadian Wheat Board. It was taking away the monopoly. If we look at and reflect on many of the Conservatives who are here today and who sit on the opposite side, the issue back then was this. When I went out to rural Manitoba, on occasion individuals would come to me and ask how the Conservatives could get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board when many of them farm wheat. It is a legitimate question. People would ask if Conservative MPs who were farming wheat or were farmers should be able to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. I guess it is a legitimate question.

In Canada we have established the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. What we have seen over the last while is the Conservatives and members of the NDP, not only on this agenda item but on previous ones also, work together more and more to attack the government. That is fine. If they want to do that, it is completely their call. However, I would suggest that there appears to be at least one, and I would suspect other, political entities in this chamber who would clearly demonstrate confidence in that office. That is what I would like to talk about today. I want to highlight the fact that, whenever there has been an opportunity for the Conservatives to be critical of this Minister of Finance, they have jumped all over it, and more often than not we have the NDP members tagging along, joining them in their opposition. I would like to give some examples of the types of instances where I believe we have seen that united opposition front, and hopefully the individuals who are listening to or following this debate will have a better appreciation of why we are where we are today.

First off, we need to be very clear. When we are elected, we are obligated to go to the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to declare our assets. The Minister of Finance is also obligated, like each and every one of us. Contrary to the misinformation from the opposition benches, the Minister of Finance did go to the commissioner to declare, and even the house in France was declared with the office.

● (1220)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Eventually.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It was not eventually.

That is just it, Madam Speaker—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that they are not to be going back and forth. The speech and the questions and comments are to go through the Speaker so that there is no debate back and forth on this.

I know we are getting to the end of the work week and I think we can all get through this, so I want to bring it back to the parliamentary secretary. There will be 10 minutes of questions and comments afterward; so if members hold onto their britches, they will get there.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will give leave to have more questions. I am more than happy to answer them.

It is in the members' speaking notes to give false information, even the member across the way who just finished heckling. That is the reality. They have no qualms doing it. They will say that no one knew about it. I have news about that house in France. Not only did the commissioner know about it, it was actually reported in a newspaper a week after the last federal election. There was no hiding when it was published in one of Canada's newspapers. Maybe they can revisit that factoid when they make their presentations today.

What needs to be emphasized is that each and every member of Parliament has an obligation to go before the commissioner and declare his or her assets, and that is exactly what the Minister of Finance has done. I would suggest that Canadians, as opposed to listening to the opposition benches and the grossly exaggerated claims at times, allow the independent office to do its job. It was good enough for Stephen Harper. These are the very same rules there were under the former prime minister. We did not see any Conservatives back then jumping up and saying to change the rules.

The reason they are talking about it today is that they are trying to change the focus from what is happening today in the real world. We have a joint opposition continuously going after the Minister of Finance. Their focus is the Minister of Finance. That is fine. They can continue focusing on the Minister of Finance. This Prime Minister and this government are going to be focused on Canadians and the constituents we represent, even those we do not represent, because we appreciate what is important to Canadians. It is critically important that we look at ways we can improve the quality of life. We often talk about Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it, because this government genuinely believes in Canada's middle class and has many initiatives that have been led by the Minister of Finance.

It is character assassination that has taken place against the Minister of Finance. Some of the members shake their heads and say that is not the case. When we hear individuals across the way trying to imply that the Minister of Finance became a member of Parliament because he wanted to enhance his financial fortunes, that is absolute rubbish. I am disappointed in any member in this House who tries to impute motives to other members who come to this House wanting to improve the society and the communities in which we live. The Minister of Finance is no different. The Minister of Finance is very passionate in wanting to invoke changes for the betterment of Canadians. Each and every one of us should know better than to make allegations.

We just had a speaker who talked about duty and honour. I suggest that we have a Minister of Finance who is committed to that duty and honour. I would challenge any member across the way to inform me as to when any other minister of finance has been so successful in the redistribution of Canada's wealth and in trying to make a difference to income inequality.

● (1225)

One of the first initiatives this government undertook, headed by the Minister of Finance, was when we decided that there was going to be a tax increase for the one per cent of Canada's wealthiest. What did the joint opposition do? New Democrats and Conservatives were more than happy to be critical of the Minister of Finance. They even voted against that special tax on Canada's wealthiest.

Business of Supply

Another initiative, which I believe was under Bill C-2 and incorporated into the budget, was the tax break for Canada's middle class to put hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of Canada's middle class. Once again, we saw the NDP working with the Conservatives in opposing it. People should read some of the speeches by the members across the way criticizing the Minister of Finance or that policy, just like they are being critical in the motion we have today. They actually voted against that initiative.

Imagine the hundreds of millions of dollars that went into taxpayers' pockets. The NDP was very critical of the Minister of Finance back then and asking about the working poor or those individuals who needed more. What did the Liberal government do then? We brought in, as a government, the increase to the Canada child benefit program. We changed it so that millionaires would no longer be receiving that particular benefit. Hundreds of millions of dollars were being put into a program and literally lifting thousands of children out of poverty. What did the NDP do? It did the same thing the Conservatives did and voted against that initiative.

It does not seem to matter what the Minister of Finance is doing; they are critical of the Minister of Finance. That is what they are doing again today. In fact, I think this is the second day we have had a motion of this nature.

One of the initiatives the Minister of Finance brought in that I was exceptionally proud of, Winnipeg North as well as other constituencies across our country—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on a point of order.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the hon. member for the past five minutes give this House a history lesson on what the government has achieved in the last two years, but I do not hear him staying relevant to the subject of the motion today.

I would ask you, in your capacity, Madam Chair, to keep the hon. member on track with the subject of the motion today and ask when he might come back to the subject at hand. We do not need a history lesson. We need debate on the motion before this House.

• (1230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On the same point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary to government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, yes, on the same point of order. This is not the first time. When the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance was speaking, we had at least two interruptions. Members opposite might not like what they are hearing, but it is not for them to determine whether it is in order.

If we take a look at everything I have said, I have been focusing my attention on the issue of the character assassination, by the joint opposition, of this Minister of Finance. I am clearly establishing that it is nothing new. I am pointing out specific examples of when this joint opposition has gone after the Minister of Finance and why we need to reinforce these points. It is absolutely relevant.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the members, first of all, that there is some latitude when debate is happening. However, I also want to maybe remind

the member of what the actual motion says and ask if he could bring it back from time to time to that relevance as he makes his speech. The motion reads as follows:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that "sunshine is the best disinfectant"; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

I know that during his speech, he was on message. If the member could bring it back to the motion, that would be great.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has five and a half minutes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is much like when I posed a question to the member for Brandon—Souris. I asked him about the Stephen Harper government operating under the very same rules, and the member for Brandon—Souris referenced Stephen Harper's budget surplus, and so forth. I can easily see the relevance in that, and I did not stand on a point of order, because one needs to take those things into consideration.

What we are really talking about is the Minister of Finance. Members from both political parties have attacked the Minister of Finance. There is absolutely nothing wrong. Members across the way might not like what I am saying, but everything I am saying is the absolute reality of what is taking place in this House of Commons and has been taking place over the last two years.

Before the interruption, I was talking about an issue that is really important to many seniors in my constituency, an initiative the Minister of Finance brought to the House, which was the guaranteed income supplement. Through the increase to that supplement, literally thousands of seniors, hundreds in my own constituency of Winnipeg North, were lifted out of poverty. Again, like today, we saw the NDP and the Conservatives work together to be critical and to ultimately vote against that initiative. The list goes on.

When we get to the crux of the issue, the matter the opposition is focusing its attention on is that it believes there is a conflict, yet like each and every one of us in the chamber, the Minister of Finance did, in fact, report all of his assets to the commissioner.

We often hear about the house the Minister of Finance has overseas. The Conservatives have no problem saying that it was not declared, when, in fact, not only was the commissioner aware of it, but there was a published article on the issue. How can the Conservatives say, when there was a published article on the issue and the commissioner knew about it, that the Minister of Finance did not declare the asset, when that is just not true? The Conservatives have no problem misrepresenting that issue.

Business of Supply

There have been opportunities for us to demonstrate, and there needs to be a demonstration, I would argue, that we have confidence in Mary Dawson and the role she plays. It would be equally false to give the impression to Canadians following this debate that it is only Liberal MPs who have to abide by what the commissioner says. I suspect that there are members of all political parties in the chamber who might be under investigation. The commissioner looks into matters when matters are brought to her attention. We know that the commissioner has a responsibility for secrecy. She might not necessarily fulfill the political agenda of the Conservative-NDP alliance. I can appreciate that, but at some point, the commissioner will provide a report.

● (1235)

I want to emphasize the importance of respecting the independence of that office, because while the opposition is focused on the Minister of Finance, the Government of Canada is focused on Canadians.

The Liberal caucus has confidence in the commissioner to continue doing the job she has been doing not only in the last two years, but for the 10 years of the Stephen Harper government, with the very same rules we are following today.

Time inside this beautiful chamber is limited, and Madam Speaker, you are telling me I have run out of time, so I would be more than happy to answer any questions members across the way might have.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has stated that the opposition is making untrue statements by saying the finance minister did not fully disclose his assets. However, I understand the Ethics Commissioner charged him \$200 for not fully disclosing his assets. Could he please explain?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is a very good example. The Minister of Finance has very clearly indicated that he has fully disclosed his assets. That was in fact done on day one. The Conservatives try to give the impression that no one knew about the house he had overseas, when in fact it was reported in a newspaper in Canada weeks after the last federal election. They are trying to give a false impression.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to address some of the comments the member made in his speech. First, I find it very interesting being lumped into an alliance with the Conservatives. The parliamentary secretary may have just inadvertently released the Liberal campaign platform for 2019, “Help us stave off the evil NDP-Conservative alliance”.

That aside, in a previous speech, my hon. colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay made mention of the smell test. It goes like this. If we were to approach members of the public on the sidewalk and explain the situation and ask “Am I in a conflict of interest?” they can give us a reliable answer, since the public is usually pretty good at perceiving what is a conflict of interest. I would like to hear the hon. member's comments on this. The finance minister owns shares in a company that he has incredible power of regulation over. He owned those shares when he introduced a bill that is going to significantly amend pension regimes for federally

regulated employees. It is a scheme that Morneau Shepell could then bid on for contracts, and if they were to increase in stock price, the Minister of Finance would have benefited from that. I think if we ask any Canadian, that would not pass the smell test.

This is not a personal attack on the finance minister. It is about the office he holds, and to put him on the same plane as a member of the opposition is completely false and misleading. Therefore, I want to know, will he just allow the finance minister to continue his job, to have the finance minister disclose his assets so the House may again have confidence in his role, that he is proceeding forth fairly and without any kind of suspicion.

● (1240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, if my friend from across the way and I were to take a walk in his constituency and posed the question, “Are members of Parliament overpaid?”, if the majority of his constituents were to respond, “Yes, MPs are overpaid”, would the member across the way then take a pay reduction?

When we talk about that so-called smell test, we always have to put things into a proper perspective. It is not just as simple as us just walking down the sidewalk in his constituency and asking, “Is the member of Parliament overpaid?” We need to provide that background information. That is one of the reasons why we have the independence of the commissioner, which is to take away partisanship, and we have confidence in that office.

I like the word “alliance”. I might want to pick up more on that. I appreciate the suggestion, because that is what it seems as of late.

On the second part, when the Minister of Finance increased the GIS, or when he brought in the pan-Canadian agreement to increase the CPP, I suspect that did not help Morneau Shepell. I wonder if the member has ever looked into that aspect.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, obviously we disagree in regard to the ethics of the finance minister, but he has had a lot of experience in government. He has a little more than I have in regard to the number of years he was in the Manitoba legislature. When I was there, he was one of two members in the Liberal Party, so I understand that he is voluminous in regard to speaking in the chamber.

He had an opportunity to do that in Manitoba over the years when I was there because spoke to a lot of bills as an opposition member. We have to remind ourselves that for 22 or 23 years he has been a member in Parliament and only two of those have been in government. He has a lot of experience in opposition and I look forward to the day when he is over here again. That might happen in two years.

The member talked in his opening remarks about the real world. The real world is that the government has huge deficits and Liberals are adding to the debt. They are making the costs of food, clothing, and heating family homes higher. They have broken about 50 promises that they tried to make and they have only been in government for two years.

Business of Supply

I wonder if he can articulate to the people of Canada why we would not be working with the NDP and all Canadians on such an important issue as the ethics of one, if not two, of the top people in government today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I did enjoy the many years in opposition in the Manitoba legislature and working with my colleague across the way there on many occasions. Having said that, in total it is about 20-plus years in opposition, two years in government. I am hoping to match and level it out hopefully, but we will have to see if the voters of Canada will make that determination.

I appreciate what the member across the way highlighted in regard to the deficit. We had a fantastic announcement about housing yesterday. The first, historic, national housing strategy was put into place yesterday. If we took the recommendation at least in part of what the member across the way is saying, and we were to have those types of debates, I have a lot of files on the deficit situation.

For example, I would say that the Harper government inherited a multi-billion surplus from the Paul Martin government before the recession that turned into a multi-billion deficit. Harper never really got rid of the deficit. We believe that, by investing in Canadians, things will happen in a more positive way here in Canada. We are starting to see the results of that with just under 500,000 new jobs in two years.

• (1245)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, I have to remind my colleague that the money he is talking about is being spent in the next decade and so it is not likely that he will ever get an opportunity to spend it. I look forward to having that opportunity to put a housing program in place that is efficient and works.

We have a finance minister who has broken rules in the House, that has not even been acceptable to his Prime Minister in his mandate letter. How can the member, who knows what those mandate letters say, possibly think that they are following it when they do not have a plan to balance the budget until 2051?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we are talking about the code of ethics from the commissioner. We have confidence in Commissioner Mary Dawson. We have made that statement on numerous occasions and the Minister of Finance, like every other member, has submitted his assets, at least we hope all members have done that. We know the Minister of Finance has and he is working very co-operatively with that office and has indicated he will continue doing so.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House and speak during the debate on the opposition day motion calling on the Liberal government's finance minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold, or held within all his private companies and trust funds since he became a finance minister.

We all heard, and we all know, about the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, where he said, "sunshine is the best disinfectant". In his quote, the Prime Minister was referring to his election pledge, promising to provide Canadians with open and transparent government. His belief was that his cabinet ministers would be above all reproach, and the best way to

prove it was to be able to shine this sunshine on it and use it as a disinfectant.

We all know about the multiple failures the Prime Minister and his Liberal government have had when it comes to fulfilling their election promises. It is a terrible record of failure. They have disappointed many Canadians who believed in the campaign promises. They believed the deficit would only be \$10 billion, and Liberals missed it by another \$18 billion.

The finance minister has, for weeks now, refused to use the disinfectant that the Prime Minister recommends to cleanse himself of the shroud of secrecy that clouds his tenure as finance minister. The finance minister refuses to come clean and tell Canadians about his personal wealth.

Before we go on further, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Shepard.

Has the finance minister intentionally refused to conduct himself under the open and transparent rules that the Prime Minister promised Canadians? Has the Prime Minister a-okayed the finance minister's constant and continuous refusal to tell Canadians what investments he owns? Has the Prime Minister a-okayed the fact that the finance minister is using his position to enrich his personal finances and his family's firm?

Is the finance minister wilfully disobeying the Prime Minister? Or is the Prime Minister backing down, succumbing to threats made by the finance minister as he refuses to confess what he owns and how he is using Canadian law, or how he used it, to enrich his own family portfolio?

The Prime Minister talks about his family fortune, so it is possible that the Prime Minister understands his fellow multi-millionaire finance minister's stubborn refusal to share with the Canadian public the details concerning the numbered companies that the finance minister owns. This refusal to be honest and open is disrespectful to all Canadian taxpayers, to the Canadian public, and to middle-class Canadians. No one can trust someone who refuses to tell the truth.

Worse, the finance minister has been playing what we call "silly games" with Canada's Ethics Commissioner for two years. The Ethics Commissioner, contrary to what the former member said, has found him guilty, and I am reading from the nature of the violation that she printed, of "Failure to include in a Confidential Report a corporation", one of the minister's corporations, "established in France and an estimate of its value", and it was the corporation that controlled the interest of his chalet in southern France; and "failure to include in the Confidential Report his directorship of that corporation".

The finance minister is playing games with the Ethics Commissioner. He is playing games with Canadians. That is why he belittled the NDP for joining together with Conservatives. I think every member of Parliament, including many on the Liberal side, are very much concerned with the direction they see this finance minister going. Canadians understand the process.

Business of Supply

When someone is named to cabinet, they declare their assets, and the Ethics Commissioner helps the new cabinet ministers sort out their assets so that the new cabinet minister is free to work on policies and government business without a conflict of interest. Everyone does it. Well, everyone is supposed to do it. It is actually easy unless there is something to hide.

We had a prime minister, the Right Hon. Paul Martin, who was also a cabinet minister. He was the minister of finance. He is very wealthy man. His family was famous for owning ships, and paying some taxes in Canada. These were massive ocean liner-sized cargo ships that operated all over the world.

● (1250)

Paul Martin immediately placed his holdings into a blind trust so he could be free to be finance minister, and then prime minister. Canadians had a reasonable assurance that he was not writing laws aimed at enriching his personal wealth. However, the current Prime Minister and his rich finance minister do not seem to understand that, or if they do, they do not care.

Paul Martin took his job and his wealth seriously, more seriously than the present Prime Minister and finance minister do. Both of them have come to Parliament fairly recently and maybe they are just uncertain. Maybe they think there are two different laws for Canadians, the wealthy and those not quite so fortunate. The current Prime Minister was born into his family fortune and considers it a privilege.

The Ethics Commissioner makes certain that these types of issues should not come to the front, and when concerns do come to the fore, she judges them. She has already found him guilty. She is already going through another investigation of the finance minister, the Prime Minister, and of other cabinet ministers.

Canadians do not need or want to hear the details of every asset, but they do want the watchdog to be satisfied that these rich politicians are doing their job without a conflict of interest between the work they do and their personal wealth. Canadians want to be sure that legislation put forward by a finance minister is not above and beyond what normal legislation is. They do not want legislation that would enhance the wealth of the finance minister.

That is part of the concern with Bill C-27, but it is not why we are here. We are here because we want to see what corporations, what assets, the finance minister has held in the last two years, and he is refusing to tell Parliament. He has refused in question period for weeks now.

The paradise papers released a few weeks ago unveiled \$250 billion owned by Canadians in offshore tax havens, where no Canadian taxes are paid on the investment profits they generate. Instead of chasing these investments and the rich Canadians who own this \$250 billion, the finance minister and the Prime Minister think it is better to raise government tax revenues off the backs of the working class, the middle class, lower income people, small business owners, farmers, waitresses, fishermen, and more.

That is why Canadians are upset about this. They see a double standard. Canadians are upset because they see one set of rules for the finance minister and another set of rules for every other

politician, and yet they bear the brunt of the finance minister's attacks. This is disgraceful.

We are watching the 1% right here in action in the House of Commons on that Liberal side. They take care of their own.

I chair the public accounts committee and this morning the Auditor General issued a report on the Phoenix system, a report on the Canada Revenue Agency, and a report on Syrian refugees. Part of what he said in his report is disappointing. He said,

I was hoping that I would be able to talk about something other than results for citizens. I keep delivering the same message that the government does not understand its results from the citizen's perspective....

It appears that our message is not being heard at a whole-of-government level... Getting these requires a concerted effort across government to understand and measure the citizen experience.

We have the same issue with the Liberal government. It simply does not understand that the people who are being governed are asking for certain responsible measures to protect them from those who govern. That is what the Ethics Commissioner does.

That is why we need to shine a light on the finance minister, so we can see exactly what the House has been asking for, namely, what corporations did he own and what corporations benefited from the measures he has put in place.

● (1255)

For all we know, he could own shares in any number of companies across this country that the government has lent, granted, or given money to, including Bombardier, marijuana grow plants, all kinds of things. All we want is the information. Canadians deserve it.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have great respect for the member opposite and his work on the public accounts committee. There was a suggestion in the member's discourse that somehow there should be different rules for members or ministers who have been successful, and members or ministers who do not have money. I am solidly in the latter group. I am not wealthy, but I think the rules of ethics apply equally to me as to any other member, and a minister and a member are the same. I would ask if they are proposing that somehow the rules should be different for different types of people who enter this chamber, and whether they trust the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that all rules are followed.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I know there are different types of rules, because I served in cabinet. I know that in cabinet, the level of accountability is greater. We recognized that. I can say that former Prime Minister Harper would come in and say to us, "Listen, we need to be above reproach. I do not want you to take a free ticket to a hockey game, because you need to be above reproach; buy your own ticket". We lived with that type of a standard he set.

The member for Winnipeg Centre asked about the Canadian Wheat Board. I own a farm and can remember when I was told that I should never take out a cash advance because I might end up voting on the Canadian Wheat Board sometime. Absolutely not, the Ethics Commissioner told us, and we did not. The—

Business of Supply

•(1300)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am happy to allow for more questions, but maybe the member will be able to add his point in his next response.

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary research branch has conflict of interest rules for federal legislatures. In them, it talks about techniques of control. They include, first, disclosure, which we know the minister did not do; second, avoidance, which we are still trying to figure out whether he avoided it or not; and third, withdrawal, which talks about recusal. Could the hon. member comment on any one of those three points in terms of what he sees the minister as having done?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, it is what he has done and it is what he has not done. We know that he has not claimed a certain corporation in the south of France that owned a beautiful chateau. He did not want Canadians to know about it. He did not want the Ethics Commissioner to know about it. He failed to report it and was found guilty, as charged by the Ethics Commissioner, and paid a fine. We know that is one thing he did not do.

One of the things that concerns me about what the minister did was that he brought bringing forward the new legislation, Bill C-27. I am not going to get into the positives and negatives of Bill C-27, but all we know is that with that one piece of legislation, the minister stands, and indeed stood, to profit massively. We know that his family company's expertise is in target benefit plans. We know that the company has been used to help formulate the target benefit plan in New Brunswick. The minister has not reported his own corporations, he has not reported his own assets to the Ethics Commissioner. He has withheld that, but he has come in the backdoor with legislation. The legislation may be alright, but his company will benefit from it.

When I signed on as a minister, I signed on recognizing that the code says that I should not bring forward anything that would benefit me financially or my family members. It may even say “friends”. I cannot recall right now. Here is the problem. This is why all the opposition parties have joined together and asked why the Prime Minister will not allow this—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I tried to allow the member some additional time, but his time has run out.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a Yiddish proverb that goes, “When you sweep the house, you find everything”, and it applies here. All the House is asking for is to sweep and find out everything.

You, Madam Speaker, are a servant of the House, just as every single member here in every single seat serves his or her constituents. We ultimately hold this power on behalf of our constituents. There is no commissioner who can replace Parliament. There is no government official who can replace the duties that we assume on behalf of the citizens and the residents of our ridings. What this House is asking for through this motion is a sweep. We want to know what the Minister of Finance holds so that we, as a

group, can judge whether he is meeting the ethical requirements we believe are necessary for a minister of the crown to meet, a minister who hold such vast powers over Canada's economy and finances.

With respect to the motion presented by the member for Carleton, he has done laudable work in proving and explaining the deficiencies shown thus far by the Minister of Finance in the conduct of his duties to Canadians in general.

The motion reads:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that “sunshine is the best disinfectant”; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

There is only one chamber in Parliament that can attest to whether a minister of the crown is fulfilling those requirements and working in the public interest. That is this House. We can lean on the commissioner, we can lean on officers of Parliament for their opinion, but they cannot substitute or replace the work that we do on behalf of the residents of our ridings. At the end of the day, it is this House that makes the judgment call, and no one else.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and his contributions, such as the smell test and comparing it to raising his twin daughters. I am glad that everyone is okay since his return to the House. He is an excellent member, who has made great contributions to this debate in the House as well.

We heard the views of the member for Battle River—Crowfoot. He was a former minister of state and brings an interesting perspective to this debate from the other side, the side that works for an executive council. He was a member of a previous cabinet, who understands what it means not only to live up to the letter of the law but also to the expectations of Canadians, of residents, and of prime ministers who set the rules and the tempo.

I previously asked this question of one of the parliamentary secretaries. We heard in the speeches from the Liberal side, and will continue to hear in questions and answers and speeches, justification for what the Minister of Finance has done. It took two years to get to the point where he admitted fault, although I do not believe he understands why he had to admit fault, and he was fined \$200 for breaching the code. The specific violations are his failure to include in a confidential report a corporation established in France, an estimate of its value, and his directorship in that corporation. I still do not believe that the Minister of Finance understands what exactly he did wrong. He knows that the Ethics Commissioner fined him, but he does not quite understand why his actions were wrong. Apart from a breach of the law, there is something much higher at stake here relating to ethics and the honourable status that all members here hold. We refer to ourselves as the “hon. member for” the riding that we represent.

Business of Supply

It is “moral and procedural blindness”, according to a *Globe and Mail* editorial describing the conduct of the Minister of Finance thus far in the past few years. I rose to ask this question. Do the speeches of justification justify all the conduct we have seen thus far, the ethical lapse, and the moral blindness to what has been going on? The members on the other side said it is okay. They said the economy is doing great and they have put in place all of these great social programs of theirs, which may or may not turn out to be good programs. Who knows? Probably not. They said it was okay that the Minister of Finance had brushed some of those crumbs off the economic table straight into his pocket, because he was giving it all back.

• (1305)

I think most Canadians would agree that if they earned a few extra million and then gave it away to charity, that it would be a pretty good day, and they would be pretty happy with themselves. However, how much did they lose out of their pockets? It would not save them that much.

This is not to say that this situation has not happened before. We can go back through Canadian history. I will use the example of British Columbia's Social Credit Party, which is an exact situation like we have here, where a minister of the crown resigned. However, we are not asking for that, yet. We are asking to see what exactly is in all the corporations that the minister holds.

My example is Stephen Rogers who sat in the British Columbia assembly. Mr. Rogers was the health minister at the time, and he resigned. He was not necessarily forced to resign, and it took some time to obtain it, but he took the honourable step and resigned due to a personal conflict with the rules. On March 4, 1987, page 6 of *The Province*, it was reported that he resigned because of a conflict of interest situation involving the family trust, which owned shares in Westmin Resources and stood to benefit from the decision to expand mining in Strathcona Park.

If we switch a couple of the words around and use different corporations, what do we get? We get a very similar situation to what we have here. What did Minister Rogers do at the time? He resigned.

We are not asking for that yet, but we want to see what type of conflicts the minister may or may not have in all the private corporations he holds. Let the sun shine in. We want to see more. We want to be the judges, which is our role on behalf of the residents of our individual ridings. The House, whether by unanimous consent or by a majority vote, can express its will, and that is what we are testing today. We have a will to let the sun shine in. We want to see whether the conduct of the Minister of Finance over the past two years has indeed been honourable. We want to judge on behalf of our residents. We are getting emails and phone calls from residents who want us to judge. We cannot do that without the information, so we are asking for that.

The B.C. situation and the resignation happened in 1986. It was a provincial minister, but it was exactly like this situation. It was a family trust and decisions were made by the minister benefited the private corporation. It is almost similar. Just change the names and we are at the same point. Therefore, the motion presses us to vote in favour of it and pass it in the House.

The headlines in the *Leader-Post* at the time, and it made it all the way to Regina, was “Former minister pleads guilty to not disclosing finances”. In that case, it went to a court of law. In this case, it was the Ethics Commissioner who fined the minister \$200. Some Canadians have said that this is far too little and that he should have been fined a much greater amount, but the act calls for that.

However, beyond just fining ministers, beyond the legalese of the situation, we should be living up to certain things, some sort of ethical standard. The Prime Minister, in mandate letters, has set out the expectation of the conduct of his ministers. The House is here to judge that conduct. The Prime Minister can judge the conduct of his ministers. He can replace or remove them with the consent of the Governor General. Also, the House should be able to judge whether ministers are meeting their ethical standards set by the Prime Minister, and not just the Prime Minister but the ethical standards and expectations of the residents of our ridings.

I want to go back to something I said in the House before, and it applies here. It is this motion that I call House sweeping. Former prime minister John Diefenbaker used to say this. He would end his speeches with this, and he would also sometimes use it as a speech crutch. He would say that he was a “House of Commons man”. This place was the most important institution to him. This was where he set his ethical and moral bar. What the House said, he accepted.

I wonder whether the finance minister will rise today at some point and defend himself and his conduct. Is he a House of Commons man or is he not?

• (1310)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think one of the reasons we are here today is that when Canadians hear the finance minister and the Prime Minister continually saying things that do not line up with the facts, they lose credibility. When the finance minister says that he has fully disclosed his assets, but the Ethics Commissioner has charged him \$200 for not disclosing his assets, it is clear there is a problem. When the Prime Minister says that there is no issue with Stephen Bronfman, but we see it on the front page today, Canadians lose confidence. I think this is why they want to know what is in all of these other companies, because there is no credibility. Therefore, we cannot just take the finance minister's word for it. Would my colleague agree?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. I refer to her that way because I know she has met all the requirements, not just of the law but the expectations of the residents of her riding.

Business of Supply

I have a problem with these speeches of justification. All day we will hear members on that side say that the economy is doing great, that they have great social programs, that we should look at what they have done. They are looking anywhere but at the personal finances of the minister. They do not want us to look there because there may be problems, and the Liberals are not sure what to do. They are not sure because none of them know what potential conflicts of interest lurk in any corporations. All they have to go on is the word of the minister.

The Ethics Commissioner has already fined the finance minister for a failure to disclose, but it took two years to get to this point. That is where I have a problem. This behaviour cannot be justified. We need to see what is in those private corporations.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. As a federal MP I like to remind the people of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert that we were elected here to talk about and address important matters.

I want to know whether the hon. member thinks it is sad to see that because of the government's patent lack of transparency we are forced to spend almost an entire day on a point of order. It is a day-long point of order.

Does he not find it sad that it has come to this?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his good question.

I certainly agree with him that this should be a point of order, because it is one.

We are forced to come to the House and move a motion to debate the matter. We are only now debating this because it took two years for us to learn the truth, for the Ethics Commissioner to tell us that under section 62 of the Conflict of Interest Act:

If an administrative monetary penalty is imposed on a public office holder in respect of a violation, the Commissioner shall make public the nature of the violation, the name of the public office holder who committed it and the amount of the penalty imposed.

She then described the nature of the violation for our benefit here in the House. Of course, the Ethics Commissioner cannot replace us. She cannot replace any members of Parliament. All she can do is provide her opinion and advice on the legislation and what it says. We are here in the House discussing a motion that simply asks the Minister of Finance to disclose all his assets within his companies.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member across the way give some sort of a clear indication as to whether he has confidence in the commissioner's office?

The commissioner has an obligation to review not only the Minister of Finance but all members. All members are obligated to report, and the commissioner has been charged with the responsibility, as opposed to a very partisan opposition party, at times, that

creates its own parameters and wants to focus on something totally different than what Canadians want the government to focus on.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is making justifications again, dodging, and evading the issue. That is what the government does all the time. It blames the Ethics Commissioner, that it is all her fault. She figured out that the Minister of Finance was not telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The \$200 fine, and the nature of the violation, speaks for itself.

We have delegated a certain amount of authority to the Ethics Commissioner. If the government does not trust her, it can replace her at any time. It has not done so because she is still investigating the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance on separate infringements of the rules, a first for a Canadian government.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to address the opposition motion. I am happy to assure the House that through smart investments and an overarching commitment to fairness, our government will ensure that Canada's best days lie ahead.

I would like to focus on the state of Canada's economy and our recent measures in the government's fall economic statement, which is a continuation of the government's plan. The foundation for plan was laid out in our two budgets and was built on during last month's fall economic statement.

The government's plan to invest in Canadians and our communities is based on the belief that when we have an economy that works for the middle class, we have a country that works for everyone. I think it is fair to say that there are many clear signs that the government's plan is working.

Right now, the Canadian economy is the fastest growing in the G7, with an average growth of 3.7%—

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to remind my colleague that we are not talking about the budget implementation act. We are not talking about the budget. We are here today to discuss a very clearly defined motion by the opposition. I would ask you, Madam Speaker, to ensure the member addresses the motion in his comments.

Earlier today, the same kinds of games were being played by other members when they went on and on to talk about the government's accomplishments, but today we are talking about the ethics, or lack thereof, of the finance minister.

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga is absolutely correct in that the speech has to be relative to the opposition motion. If he could bring his speech around to the motion, that would be greatly appreciated. There is some latitude, however, it has to be related to the motion itself.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, with respect, the way my hon. colleague characterized the motion is inaccurate. I will read the last line of the motion, which has nothing to do with ethics.

Business of Supply

The last line states that the finance minister “determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.” That part of the motion draws into complete question whether his private interests conflict with his public duties. I am relating to the House, all my colleagues, and all Canadians that he has put his public duties first. His financial interests have nothing to do with the fall economic statement and, in fact, by laying out the success our economy is seeing, any Canadian or objective bystander would come to the conclusion that the finance minister's public duties always come first. That is the very essence of the motion.

To say my comments are irrelevant, my friend is misguided and, in fact, not based on the words of the motion. With respect to the hon. member, I appreciate him interrupting my speech, but to grandstand and bring the House's attention away from the success the Canadian government is having, away from the success that Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I want to remind members of the opposition that while the member is speaking, we need to afford him the respect he deserves. There will be a chance for questions and comments. I understand we are getting close to the end of the week, however, the member has brought his speech around, and I would ask him to continue.

The hon. member for Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora).

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, right now, the Canadian economy is the fastest growing in the G7, with average growth of 3.7% after the last four quarters. This is due, in large part, to increased consumer confidence, a direct result of programs like the Canada child benefit, which puts more money in the pockets of moms and dads, so they can pay off debt, buy hockey equipment or healthier food for their children and families.

Everywhere we look, there are signs of progress for the middle class. Over 500,000 jobs have been created since 2015 and the unemployment rate is nearly the lowest it has been in a decade. Canadian economic growth has accelerated sharply since the second half of 2016. Over the last four quarters, the Canadian economy has had its fastest rate of growth in more than 10 years, and growth is forecast to be 3.1% in 2017, significantly above expectations at the beginning of this year.

These gains, coupled with a better-than-expected fiscal outcome in 2016-17, have resulted in a real positive improvement to our budget outlook. In fact, Canada's fiscal outlook has improved by over \$6.5 billion annually, on average, compared to what we were expecting in March. The federal debt-to-GDP ratio has been firmly placed on a downward track, with Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio projected to remain the lowest in the G7. Our government and the finance minister are committed to preserving Canada's low-debt advantage for current and future generations.

The actions the government has taken are having a real positive impact on our economy and for Canadians.

I would now like to go into more detail about how the government's recent fall economic statement proposes to keep us on this positive track.

Canada's fast-growing economy is giving our government the ability to reinvest the benefits of growth back into the people who contributed most to that success. This is why we are strengthening the Canada child benefit, to ensure it continues to play a vital role in supporting families for years to come. The CCB will be strengthened by making annual cost of living increases starting in July 2018, two years—

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Another point of order from the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, again, I am questioning the relevance of this debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I must remind the member that he has wavered from the actual motion, which in part states, “to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.” He can look at the whole motion. If he would like, I can send a copy of the motion over to him. However, I remind the member that there is some latitude, but it has to be brought back to the main motion.

The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, the relevance of my speech and the reason it is important that I lay out the great fiscal success Canada is experiencing is that a finance minister clearly—

Mrs. Kelly Block: Well, she has just ruled, so the member might want to pay attention to that.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Respect the ruling, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. If people want to speak and are not in agreement, they can either wait for questions and comments or get up on points of order.

I want to remind the member that the wording of the motion is as follows:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that “sunshine is the best disinfectant”; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

That is the motion, and I trust that the member will come back around to it.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, the motion says whether “his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.” The finance minister who has overseen the greatest growth the country has seen in a decade is clearly achieving his public duties. Yes, sunshine is the best disinfectant. We agree with that statement; sunshine is the best disinfectant, and that is part of the motion.

I do not know if my hon. friends want to cherry-pick parts of the motion. Perhaps they should be a little more clever on how they word their motions if they do not want to open them up to comments that they do not necessarily agree with, but my comments—

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that the motion is what it is, and the member has to redirect his speech according to the motion. I remind the member that when the Speaker enforces a rule, he or she can call the member to order, and if necessary, warn the member of the risk of being directed to discontinue a speech. I remind the member that he is to bring it back to the motion that is before the House.

The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, I am having trouble seeing how it is not related to the motion, but I will try to make it more clear for all members to be able to clearly see that this is related.

Part of the motion says that “sunshine is the best disinfectant”. We on this side agree with that. Sunshine is like daylight, shining a light on things that exist. I am using daylight to shine a light on the success of the Canadian economy seen under the leadership of this government and under the policies of the finance minister. That is why things like the success of the CCB and the growth in the economy show and shed light on a successful economy. It throws light on a finance minister who clearly has the public interest at the heart of all the decisions he makes.

How else would there be 500,000 jobs created, if the finance minister were not interested in his public duties? How else would Canada lead the G7 in growth, at 3.7%? How else could Canadian families be so confident in the economy, if the finance minister were not doing his public duties properly? He is, in fact. There is no interest that conflicts with these public duties.

This is why it is so clearly related to the motion. The success, the growth, the job creation, and the more money in the pockets of all Canadians show that the finance minister was only performing his duties in the interests of Canadians. That is why it is important that we continue to shed sunlight on the success of the Canadian economy.

It is clear that the opposition motion is meant to draw the false conclusion that the finance minister is not interested in performing his duties as finance minister, is not interested in performing successfully his duty as finance minister, is not interested in making sure every Canadian has a fair and real chance at success. The truth, the reality, is quite the opposite.

We do not need to look any further than our own neighbourhoods to see Canadians confident, to see that Canadians who were struggling to make ends meet now have a better chance of doing so.

For instance, the WITB, the income tax benefit that was announced in the fall economic statement, is another fine example of a finance minister who cares about his public duties. How else can we explain a finance minister coming up with a policy that will help those who are the most vulnerable in our society, those who are having trouble making ends meet? These people will now have the ability to make ends meet. Many of these people are working two or three part-time jobs. This will help them, and I think all my colleagues agree that these are the people who need help the most.

The motion before us talks about sunlight being the best disinfectant. We can all agree on that, and I appreciate the applause because it is the best disinfectant. In any type of light, whether it be sunshine or the bright lights of the House, it is clear when one looks

and sees what is revealed that it is an economy working for all Canadians. It is a finance minister working for all Canadians. It is a government that at the heart of all its policies wants every Canadian to have a real and fair chance at success.

No opposition day motion is going to change that reality. No opposition day motion would change the fact that Canada and the economy are booming. Canadians are confident. Canadians are ready to innovate. Canadians are innovating. Small and medium-sized businesses will be getting a tax cut down to nine per cent by January 1, 2019.

● (1330)

Any amount of sunshine shone on that policy will reveal how important it is that our small and medium-sized enterprises can continue to create jobs, can continue to invest in their workers, can continue to invest in Canadians, and can continue to help grow the Canadian economy.

That is exactly what we are talking about today. In whose interests is the finance minister working? It is clear, by any measure, that the only interests he is working for are the interests of Canadians. That is why looking at the Canadian economy is so important and so relevant to this motion. In fact, it is the only way we can ever decide how to vote on this motion, if we look at it in the total context, the economic context—

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was so hopeful that the member's speech was finished. I thought he was out of time. Seeing that there is still so much time, I would ask you to please enforce your ruling that the member is not talking about the topic at hand and that he needs to come back to the topic at hand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member for that point. I do want to remind the members of the opposition as well to keep it down, because there was quite a bit of heckling going on a while ago.

I want to advise the member that, actually, the member for Newmarket—Aurora did bring it around. He still has about four and a half minutes in his speech. I would just remind members that if they are anxious to ask questions or make comments, they can hold on for a few more minutes.

The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

● (1335)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your sound judgment. I do appreciate it.

It is no surprise that Tories want me to keep quiet. I take that as a badge of honour, and thank them very much. When Canadians speak about how good the economy is, the Tories want to distract them. When Canadians speak about the growth and the economic prosperity we have in the country, the Tories want to change the channel. Why is that?

Business of Supply

It is because we can compare these two years to the 10 before, where growth was middling, unemployment was high, and confidence was low. It was a decade of darkness in the Canadian economy. In these two years, my friends will realize, going back to the analogy, the sunshine has come into the Canadian economy and shown to all that we can prosper in the new economy. Canadians are innovating and will continue to innovate in the new economy. The Canadian economy leads the world right now, and the more light shone on that fact, the better for all, I say.

This is why my Conservative friends across the floor dread the fact that I have four more minutes to speak. I speak the truth. I reveal the prosperity, so all Canadians can see it. I clearly underlined the contrast between two years of Liberal rule and 10 years of Conservative rule. My friends across the floor do not want the Speaker to remember those 10 years. They do not want the Speaker to remember any of their problems. They do not want that. It is not just the Speaker, but it is all of us and all Canadians.

When they ask if we agree that we should shine the light, I say we should shine the light, we should shine it bright, and we should shine it on the 10 years' record. The only result that will come is that it will not be a disinfectant, but it will reveal failed policies. It will reveal the lost decade of Canada. This is what we are talking about. This is not only relevant to the motion; this is relevant to every Canadian's daily life.

The government and the Minister of Finance are committed to serving the interests of all Canadians. Make no mistake about that. Any inference to the contrary, in my humble assessment, is a misguided one. Do not take my word for it. Let us look at the stock markets for another example. There are record highs in the Toronto Stock Exchange. Investors agree with the policies of this finance minister.

We are well poised. We are positioned for growth. Canada is once again leading the world on so many issues, and above all, which I am proud to say, there is no country ahead of Canada in economic growth. Canada is second to none, and we will continue to be so. That is why this motion is so unnecessary, so superfluous and irrelevant. Clearly, a finance minister who oversees this growth and who makes sure the Canadian economy is robust and continues to be so, clearly, has only the interests of Canadians at heart. That is the essence of the motion.

I do not think it will surprise my friends when I say I am going to happily vote against this motion, and proudly. A vote for this motion, in my opinion, is a vote against the Canadian economy, and I will never vote against the Canadian economy, nor will any of my colleagues.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, this topic is relevant and it is timely. The reason is that there is an obvious blind spot with the current government and particularly with the finance minister. Even *The Globe and Mail* agreed. However, little did I know that the problem does not just come from the Prime Minister to the finance minister. It seems to have invaded the whole caucus because this member here has a blind spot when it comes to judging whether the minister is owning up to the responsibilities he is obligated to, and not only

under the Conflict of Interest Act but also the Prime Minister's own ministerial guidelines that say the ethical bar should be quite high.

Therefore, I go back to it. Would the member agree with most Canadian mothers and fathers who say to their children every day, "work hard but make sure in all things you do that you are honest and treat people with respect"? When will the current government treat Canadians with respect by having its minister come clean with the conduct of his own office?

• (1340)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's attentiveness during what must have seemed a rather long speech to that side of the House.

I am a father myself, and what I say to my children is the same as any parents say to their children, of course, "work hard and you will get ahead; be true to yourself; be kind to one another". These are the types of lessons our children need to learn, and in Canada every child will have the opportunity to succeed. Every child, regardless of where in the country or outside of the country he or she is born, regardless of what the parents do for a living, and regardless of what region a child grows up in, will have that same fair and real chance at success. Our government is committed to that as the overarching goal. Therefore, I am very proud to tell my children that our finance minister has their best interest at heart as he helps to create an economy where they will have a strong and robust future and every chance at success that every Canadian kid deserves.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member made mention of children. There are several of us in this chamber who are parents. Our children often try to lay the blame for something they have done on their siblings, which we have seen the government doing. They often try to change the topic when the topic gets too uncomfortable for them to speak about.

That aside, the member for Newmarket—Aurora talked about a lot of sunlight in his speech, and I am glad he agrees with us that sunlight is the best disinfectant. I made reference in my earlier speech to the Liberals' sunny ways and how it is a reference to Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his reference to Aesop's fable. The sun and the wind had a competition to see who was best able to remove a traveller's cloak and the sun's warm rays proved better than the wind's bluster. I wonder if the hon. member will join us in the opposition to use sunshine as the best disinfectant and to use those sunny ways to remove the finance minister's coat of silence to expose the truth.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. friend's interest in Aesop's fable. Of course, that is the source of the sunny ways.

Sunny ways are of course to be lauded. Sunny ways are something we should always strive for. Every now and then when it is too hot in the sun, sometimes a little bluster is good to cool us off. I sensed the House getting a little hot and I was happy to try to cool it down a bit. I was happy to make that contribution to the well-being and the comfort of my hon. colleagues in this House.

Business of Supply

However, there is no cloak that needs to be removed from the finance minister. Everything has been revealed to the Ethics Commissioner. That is the regime we have in Canada. The minister is following the guidance of the Ethics Commissioner and will continue to do so.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could just expand on his last answer. We see opposition parties working together to focus on the Minister of Finance. I would argue that as they want to focus on the Minister of Finance, this government continues to focus on Canadians, in wanting to ensure that Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it continue to advance under good leadership that is coming from the Minister of Finance on a litany of issues. I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts on some of those positive things that this Minister of Finance has done such as the tax break for our middle class, the Canada child benefit, and the guaranteed income supplement increase, literally lifting thousands of children and seniors out of poverty.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, of course, the finance minister and the government on the whole have done a lot. They continue to pursue policies that help the middle class and those working hard to join it. The CCB is a good example. The guaranteed income supplement is another good example, as well as the middle-class tax cut. Now, the WITB is going to help those who need it most. Also, there is the small business tax cut that is proposed to happen in 2018-19. All of these policies are meant to ensure that our economy continues to grow and Canadians continue to have the opportunities that they so richly deserve.

• (1345)

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Newmarket—Aurora has been very entertaining for the last 20 minutes. I know the strategy of the Liberal caucus is to fill time, and he did an admirable job of filling time.

Last week we had a break, and I happened to read in the paper where all of the members on the Liberal benches had been instructed by the PMO to go out and listen to their constituents that week. We did the same thing. We did not have to be instructed. We just do that automatically. I want to ask the member, when he was talking to his constituents last week, what were they telling him about the minister and his unethical behaviour? I can say what our constituents are telling us. If he is going to tell us something different, then I am going to suggest he is not doing a very good job of listening to his constituents.

Some hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Before I go to the member for Newmarket—Aurora, I am still hearing a lot of heckling on both sides of the House, so I want to remind members, if they have questions and comments they can actually stand up and try to be recognized.

The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I thank my colleague for it. I also want to take this opportunity to let him know that the Argos are probably going to beat the

Stampeders at Sunday's Grey Cup. That could be a different issue once again.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Put some sunshine on it.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: That would be illegal.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Obviously, people are looking forward to the weekend. I would just remind members that we are still doing questions and comments.

I would ask the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora to get on topic.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Madam Speaker, I will certainly bring it back around to comments. The question was what were we doing in our constituency week. I spoke to a lot of my constituents, as every member in the House did. I heard a lot of things. Most of them were: "Keep up the good work", "Keep working hard", and "Don't let the distractions keep you away from the job at hand". Those were the types of things I was hearing.

Also, I created a Canada 150 medal for volunteers, and I took the opportunity during break week to give 150 volunteers in the wonderful riding of Newmarket—Aurora a medal to thank them for making their community better and the country better. That is what I did on my break week. I came back feeling refreshed, positive, and ready to roll in the House as we get toward the Christmas break, like all my colleagues. I hope he had as successful a constituency week as I did.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise on behalf of my constituents.

The way this place works oftentimes is that the Canadian public decides who is going to be in government and who is going to be in opposition and they do so because they want to provide contrast. Today, Her Majesty's loyal opposition I am proud to report will be offering some contrast to the bromides we have heard from the government.

When I was first elected to this place one of the very first things I did was to read the member's handbook. We all know that is a lengthy read. One of the first things it impressed upon me was the great number of rules that have accumulated over the years. Some are extremely specific and others are quite obscure. With others, we question if it really needs to be said. We all know why we have such a variety of rules. Over time, someone invariably did something that he or she should not have done, and that individual was caught. Typically, when that situation occurs the excuse is that there is nothing specific in the rules which says it could not be done so therefore nothing wrong was done. Does that sound familiar? Let us look at this case.

Business of Supply

We do not have a rule that specifically says a minister must place his or her assets into a blind trust. We do have a rule that says that a minister may not hold publicly traded securities directly and if those securities are not sold, they must be held in a blind trust. We know about this loophole and I imagine others will explore the loophole as the government has said no to closing said loophole. When we have a situation where the rules are not explicitly clear, one could say I am following the rules.

According to our rules, I have to ask permission to share time with the MP for Edmonton West. I hope that will be accommodated.

We know that the finance minister told his former firm that he expected he would put his assets into a blind trust. This has been said publicly. Why do we think the minister said that to his former firm? I would submit to this place that the minister is an intelligent man and he knew full well that placing his assets into a blind trust was the correct thing to do, which is why at that time he made that comment.

Despite having made the comment and clearly knowing the importance of blind trusts to our system of ensuring that those who lead the country do not personally profit from activities of their own office, the minister ultimately refused to do so. I will leave it up to this place to speculate on the reasons why.

Unfortunately, things only get worse from here.

We also know that at the same time, the finance minister continued to knowingly hold shares indirectly in a company that would significantly benefit from Bill C-27. At no time did the minister recuse himself from that legislation and that is deeply troubling.

Lest we not forget, we only learned of these details as they slowly leaked out. At first the minister claimed he was not in any conflict. Then, under pressure, the minister finally sold all of the shares that he accumulated, dividends most likely that he profited from. Then in question period this week, he told us that he is no longer in a conflict position because he has sold the shares in question. The problem with that is if not owning the shares means he is not in conflict, what did it mean when the Minister of Finance did own the shares? Once again I will leave it up to this place to contemplate that.

More troubling is that when the Prime Minister was asked when he first learned that his finance minister had not placed his assets into a blind trust, as many believe he had, the Prime Minister refused to answer this question.

One thing we have learned about this particular Prime Minister is that the only time we get a clear answer is when the answer is not politically damaging. Let us not forget the Prime Minister tells this place very little about his own ethics investigation.

Now we have this problem. Canadians thought they had a finance minister who had placed his assets into a blind trust and by extension when he failed to do this, he introduced a bill that caused those shares to increase in value.

• (1350)

Yes, he may well have since sold those shares, after the fact I might add, and donated those profits away, but that does not change the fact that this was all after the fact, once someone else leaked that

information. When we learned that the finance minister did not recuse himself from Bill C-27 and that there was no ethics screen, I asked this question: What would happen had no one leaked that these shares were not in a blind trust? I will leave it to those in this place to contemplate that.

However, one thing that is clear is this. When all of these things occurred on the part of the finance minister, it created a serious credibility problem. Of course, that is why we are here today, because we know that the finance minister has other numbered companies. What we do not know is what assets are in those companies. If the finance minister truly has nothing to hide, then surely he would just disclose those assets. The finance minister is an intelligent person and would know this. However, despite knowing this, he continues to refuse to provide the necessary transparency, and he now has the gall to question this as somehow being an attack on his character.

I can assure the finance minister and this place that there is no such thing. Instead, it is an opportunity for transparency to help restore badly needed confidence. After all, why do we have conflict of interest guidelines? Why do we have a Conflict of Interest Act? It is to ensure that public office holders, and in particular ministers of the crown, do not personally profit from the decisions they make that are meant to be for the public benefit. It is a matter of trust. This is not a new thing. Why were blind trusts first created? Why did the Prime Minister publicly disclose he was using a blind trust? Why are other members of the cabinet using blind trusts? Why have previous ministers of the crown used blind trusts? We all know the answer to these questions. I do not have to leave it up to this place to contemplate that. It is all about transparency and how ministers of the crown honourably conduct themselves.

Before I close, I would like to leave members with this one question. There is no doubt that they will hear many times throughout the discussion today that the Prime Minister, as we all know, came into this place and said, "sunshine is the best disinfectant." Why do we think the Prime Minister said that? Did he say it because it was politically convenient to do so at the time? Did he say it because the principle should only apply to everyone else but a Liberal finance minister, or because it happens to be true? At the end of this debate, when we vote on this motion, the Prime Minister will have an opportunity to show his commitment to his own words of wisdom, as will all members of this place. Will we vote for transparency or will some choose to vote for the continued cloak of darkness and secrecy?

I look forward to hearing the good questions that members have for me today.

Statements by Members

• (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be voting in support of confidence in the commissioner. The commissioner's office is independent. We find the opposition parties constantly going after the Minister of Finance on a wide range of issues. They have consistently done that. What we have witnessed is a character assassination of the Minister of Finance. Just like every one of us has an obligation to report to the commissioner all of our assets, the Minister of Finance has done likewise. As the members of the opposition try to change the channel, we are focused on what is in the best interests of Canadians. If they want to focus on the Minister of Finance, that is fine.

I will be voting in support of the Ethics Commissioner, Mary Dawson, and voting against this motion.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, in this country we have a great system of responsible government. That means that all of us in this place are a determining factor in whether there is confidence in the government, its actions and policies, including the personal conduct of individual ministers. The Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner aims to help encourage and build trust so that Canadians know there is disclosure, but it does not supplant the absolute imperative for us, as members of Parliament, to hold individual government ministers and the Liberal government itself to account. I would simply ask that the Liberals continue to maintain responsible government and not a delegated government to an office such as the Ethic Commissioner.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about something that a number of members have discussed today, and that is the possible inability of the finance minister to recognize his ethical responsibilities; ergo, his conflict situation. We know he was born into wealth, married into great wealth, and has lived in a rarified atmosphere that the vast majority of Canadians cannot relate to. One of the specialties of the firm that bears the family name is offshore tax avoidance. One of the family yachts does not fly the Canadian flag, but flies the flag of the Marshall Islands.

I ask my colleague whether he thinks the finance minister perhaps believes he is above all of the rules and regulations that we and other Canadians have to follow, the exception, of course, being the Prime Minister.

• (1400)

The Speaker: It being two o'clock, I am going to ask the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola to hold that thought, as it is now time for statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

INTERESTS OF QUEBEC

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this has been a busy week in Ottawa. The federal government has found a way to disregard the clear will of Quebecers four times this week, and it is only Thursday.

It said no to the unanimous request by the Quebec National Assembly to reverse the federal decision and prohibit small knives on planes; it said no to the National Assembly's unanimous request to delay the legalization of cannabis for one year; it said no to the National Assembly's unanimous request to award Davie our fair share of the shipbuilding contracts and support our 600 workers who could lose their jobs next week; and it said no to Quebec's request for the transfer of its share of the affordable housing fund. The government prefers to play petty politics at the expense of less fortunate families.

That is what happened in just four days of Canadian federalism. Anyone can understand why we prefer to keep our tax money in Quebec.

* * *

[*English*]

MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize an outstanding municipal councillor in my riding of South Shore—St. Margarets.

Lee Nauss just celebrated his 50th year as a municipal councillor in the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. First elected in 1967, Lee has won 16 consecutive elections since then. He is the longest-serving politician in Nova Scotia, and certainly one of the longest serving municipal politicians in Canada. Lee has been a driving force behind many initiatives in our area, including the solid waste facility; a new hospital, the new Riverview Enhanced Living care facility; new schools; and a new lifestyle centre.

As every member of this House knows, public life does not just affect those elected to office, but also their families. To Lee's wife, Margaret, and his family, I thank them for sharing him with his community. I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Lee, and wishing him all the best for the next 50 years.

* * *

FIREFIGHTING

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past Tuesday, debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-365, began. I thank all members who contributed to the debate. Bill C-365 proposes support for Canadian firefighters who stand ready to answer the call of duty 365 days a year.

Firefighters depend on their equipment to do their job, and Bill C-365 seeks to provide specific denunciations and deterrence of mischief or theft related to firefighting equipment. Momentum for Bill C-365 is building, with broad support received from firefighters, fire chiefs, fire prevention officers, their national associations, and the public. I am truly grateful for this support.

We all have an opportunity to support this initiative. I invite all Canadians to support our firefighters and this bill by signing online e-petition 1373 on the House of Commons website.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***CANADIAN FORCES**

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, we continue to honour the memory of our men and women in uniform.

Ninety-nine years after the signing of the armistice, I rise in the House as a former Royal Canadian Air Cadet officer, as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, and as the member of Parliament for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin to encourage all members to appreciate how much the men and women of our armed forces contribute to our society all year long, and not just in November.

We must also honour those who are not deployed, but who sign up with the same desire to serve their country and their fellow Canadians.

On behalf of all members of the House, I thank our veterans and the members of our armed forces.

* * *

● (1405)

INTERESTS OF QUEBEC

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every community in Quebec is preparing for the future, and I could not be prouder to represent the people of Longueuil and Saint-Hubert.

Quebec wants to attract the best aerospace and electric transportation companies in the world. In Quebec, there are people who advocate for housing, for active mobility, for accessible bike paths in winter, including the one on the Jacques Cartier Bridge, and for the ability to get out and enjoy the fresh air in summer without the constant drone of airplanes overhead. Quebecers also dream of being able to once again spend time along the banks of the river, which have been inaccessible for decades because of the highway.

In order to achieve those priorities and ambitions, we need Ottawa to act as a receptive partner, particularly when it comes to housing in a city like ours, where over one-third of children live below the poverty line. Instead, we saw yesterday that the government has chosen to take a paternalistic approach by deciding for Quebecers what their priorities should be.

People all across Quebec voted for their municipal officials last week. It is now Ottawa's turn to work in partnership with Quebecers and help them achieve the high ambitions they have for their cities.

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*[English]***LOUIS RIEL**

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, I stood at the grave of a great leader. One hundred and thirty-two years ago, Manitoba leader Louis Riel was executed.

Rejecting many protests and popular appeals, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald decided to hang him. His body was transported to

Saint Boniface, where his remains were taken to the cathedral's cemetery at the head of a massive procession made up of the leaders and citizens of Manitoba. His grave, as well as his Winnipeg home and the Batoche National Historic Site, remain well-visited historic sites to this day.

Louis Riel, first premier of Manitoba, a Father of Confederation, and a member of Parliament elected three times, was never allowed to take his seat in this chamber.

We look forward to continuing to work with Métis partners to build stronger relationships and better opportunities for Métis people. We are committed to walking the journey of reconciliation with them.

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FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest privileges we have is serving others. Before my election as member of Parliament for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, I helped to represent the people of Lobo Township, Middlesex Centre, and the county of Middlesex.

The directors of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities are in Ottawa this week, and we have had the opportunity to welcome many amazing municipal leaders. While discussions covered many issues, in my area they raised concerns about legalized marijuana and infrastructure needs outside of large urban areas.

I want to thank Joanne Vanderheyden, the mayor of Strathroy-Caradoc, from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, and all the municipal leaders for taking the time to meet with us. Working together and listening to municipal concerns, we build a stronger nation.

* * *

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to highlight some of the great men and women who live in my riding of Miramichi—Grand Lake. Last week, I was honoured to award sesquicentennial pins to 20 well-deserving community leaders.

[Translation]

The honourees demonstrated what being Canadian is really all about and used their exceptional leadership abilities to make a major contribution to their community. I am honoured to represent this diverse group of people who have given so much of themselves to their community.

[English]

The list of honourees included volunteer firefighters, those involved with the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association, local artists, authors, historians, immigrants, champions of the LGBTQ community, and two first nation chiefs.

Recognizing this fantastic group of Canadians was one of the greatest pleasures and privileges I have had since being elected. I continue to be inspired by the constituents of Miramichi—Grand Lake.

*Statements by Members***CHRISTMAS IN THE VILLAGE FESTIVAL**

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend is the second annual Christmas in the Village Festival in Streetsville. Highlighted by horse and carriage rides, delicious food from local restaurants, fresh maple taffy treats, live music, and of course, a visit from Santa Claus himself, it will be a fun-filled weekend for the whole family.

I personally look forward to taking part in the lighting of the Christmas tree in Streetsville Village Square, officially kicking off the holidays in the community. I also look forward to seeing so many of my constituents get into the spirit of the season.

Although the treasured annual parade will be missed this year, this weekend will be a great time for all in attendance, because as BIA chair Todd Ladner stated in a letter to me, “nooobody” does Christmas like Streetsville.

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● (1410)

GREY CUP 2017

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Grey Cup festivities are under way. Today we salute the Hall of Fame Class of 2017. The players:

We have Anthony Calvillo, a glorious 20-year career, three Grey Cup rings, all-time CFL and pro-football leading passer.

We salute Mike O'Shea, 16 years in the league, three Grey Cups, second all-time for defensive tackles.

We salute Geroy Simon, 15-year career, three Grey Cups, the league's all-time leader in receiving yards.

We also salute Kelvin Anderson for eight seasons of rushing over 1,000 yards.

We have the builder, Stan Schwartz, of Calgary, for five decades of service to football.

We cannot forget about Brian Towriss, the all-time winningest coach in Canadian college football history. Brian is from Saskatchewan. He won three Vanier Cups with the Huskies and was part of that program as coach and player for over three decades.

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YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last weekend I visited the Family Worship Centre in Pickering to announce that our government will be supporting their efforts to assist at-risk youth in our community through the skills link program. Through the leadership of Bishop Joseph Fisher, the Family Worship Centre has spent over a decade supporting young people in my community.

The Family Worship Centre's programs in my riding will help 30 at-risk but ambitious young people successfully navigate the job market, including pursuing entrepreneurship. As a key part of our youth employment strategy, the skills link program is helping young Canadians overcome barriers to employment. Most importantly, it is

helping to break the damaging cycle of no experience, no job, and no job because of no experience.

Together we can ensure that all young Canadians, no matter their ethnicity or family income, have the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.

* * *

GREY CUP 2017

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thousands of football fans have descended on Ottawa for Canada's unofficial national holiday: the Grey Cup. What a way to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Fans from across our great nation will gather to celebrate our game. Fans of the Lions, the Stampeders, the Eskimos, the Roughriders, the Blue Bombers, the Ticats, the Argonauts, the Redblacks, and the Alouettes all come together to celebrate Canadian football. A few of them may even have a beer or two.

This annual Canadian tradition has seen it all: the fog bowl, the mud bowl, the ice bowl, the 13th man, and a horse or two in a hotel lobby.

To the Calgary Stampeders and the Toronto Argonauts, congratulations, and good luck in the 105th Grey Cup. As a lifelong Argos fan, I look forward to the Grey Cup coming back to Toronto.

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HOLODOMOR

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am reminiscing today about my grampa. When I was four, my grampa would sit me down on a beautifully carved loveseat that my grandparents brought with them when they immigrated to Canada, and he would dance for me. I am so thankful they chose to immigrate to Canada. I am blessed to be their granddaughter today.

My grandparents came to Saskatchewan in 1926, five years before the Stalin communist regime committed a horrific act of genocide known as the Holodomor, or death by hunger, in Soviet Ukraine. For years, this atrocity was covered up. Ten million Ukrainians died from brutal starvation. At its worst, 17 per minute, 1,000 every hour, 25,000 a day, were exterminated by artificial famine.

I am thankful that in 2008, the Canadian government unanimously recognized this genocide and passed the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day Act. I am thankful that there is an increased opportunity for young Canadians to learn the truth of this atrocity that continues to be part of the painful history of our Ukrainian community in Canada and throughout the world.

Statements by Members

●(1415)

*[Translation]***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Sadly, Mr. Speaker, violence against women and girls remains one of the most widespread human rights violations, with more than one in three women experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. According to statistics from the United Nations, 750 million women were married before age 18, and more than 250 million women have undergone female genital mutilation. Eliminating all forms of violence against women is essential. November 25 will mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

I want to express appreciation to the members of the Centre de femmes l'Éclaircie, who dedicate themselves heart and soul to helping all women get through hardships. I invite all of my colleagues to salute these people, who are making a big difference in the fight for gender equality.

* * *

*[English]***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the extraordinary work of leaders in Victoria, across Canada, and indeed the world to raise awareness, to de-stigmatize, and to end gender-based violence.

This Saturday is the UN international day to end violence against women. November 25 marks the start of 16 days of action. Activism against gender-based violence is part of the annual Orange the World campaign, orange being the colour of hope and courage.

I want to thank Rosemary O'Connell and Trudy Moul, of Development and Peace-Caritas Canada, and Phyllis Webster and Shirley Swift, of Victoria GRAN, for their advocacy to support women's organizations working for peace. In honour of their work and the UN Orange the World campaign, I am wearing orange today.

One in three women experience physical or sexual violence worldwide. Prevention is the key. Let us do our part to treat violence against women as a human rights violation and adopt laws and prevention programs so that violence against women and girls is ended in our lifetime.

* * *

GREY CUP 2017

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, all of Canada will be focused on our most important annual sporting event, the 105th Grey Cup. The much storied Toronto Argonauts are underdogs to win a record 17th championship. The Argos won their spot through last-minute heroics in a come-from-behind win over Saskatchewan, sparing the green 'Riders the uncomfortable awkwardness of being the eastern team facing Calgary.

The Argonauts, led by a youthful 38-year-old Ricky Ray, deliver when it counts. With stars like S.J. Green and DeVier Posey, Marcus Ball, Martese Jackson, James Wilder, and York—Simcoe's own

Corey Watman on the line, the double blue are an exciting team to watch.

We thank Argo's owner Larry Tanenbaum for supporting the remarkable rebuilding, led by Michael Copeland, Sara Moore, Marc Trestman, and Jim Popp.

Congratulations to new CFL Commissioner Randy Ambrosie for outstanding leadership and a great season.

Let us all take in the great tradition, a deep part of our identity, a week-long party of fans from across Canada, capped off by the uniquely Canadian game, the Grey Cup. Go, Argos.

* * *

*[Translation]***MCGILL'S WOMEN IN HOUSE PROGRAM**

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, as part of McGill's Women in House program, a group of 35 to 40 young women from McGill University spend two unforgettable days here.

The goal of this non-partisan program is to promote women's interest in politics and provide an opportunity to meet inspiring female politicians who can share their experiences and discuss their exciting work with the students.

[English]

As the MP for McGill, and a fourth-generation McGill graduate, the first man in that lineage, I sincerely hope this opportunity encourages these bright young minds to put their names on the ballot.

The under-representation of women in politics is a well-known and systemic problem. Overcoming it requires the education and opportunities that McGill's Women in House provides.

[Translation]

I want to extend a warm welcome to all of the young women from McGill University who are here today.

[English]

This House is theirs. I hope to see one of them in these seats in 2019.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's close friend, Stephen Bronfman, evaded paying taxes when he stashed away more than \$60 million in sheltered offshore accounts. When these revelations came to light a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister rushed to defend his top fundraiser, saying he was satisfied with the assurances that he received from Mr. Bronfman.

We now know for certain that Bronfman was in fact directly linked to the trusts. What assurances did Mr. Bronfman give to the Prime Minister, and is he still satisfied?

• (1420)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is well aware that it is a multi-billion-dollar issue. We invested close to \$1 billion in our last two budgets.

The Canada Revenue Agency uses information from lists shared by participating BEPS countries. This is why, as of September 30, 2017, the agency was conducting more than 990 audits and 42 criminal investigations related to offshore financial structures. The agency is examining ties with Canadian entities and will take appropriate action with regard to the paradise papers. We continue to work for Canadians.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of investigations, the Prime Minister was not the only one to rush to defend Mr. Bronfman. The Liberal Party jumped on board, and in doing so it actually misled Canadians. It said in its statement, "Stephen Bronfman had no other direct or indirect involvement whatsoever in the Kolber Trust." Now that we know the truth, could the minister confirm that Mr. Bronfman is now under one of the many investigations at the CRA?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to fighting tax evasion and avoidance. It is funny to hear Conservatives talk about the importance of fighting tax evasion when a former national revenue minister, Mr. Blackburn, publicly stated that it was not a priority for the Conservative government.

In the last year they were in office, the Harper government conducted 98 offshore audits. By contrast, we conducted 223 last year. In the last year they were in office, the Conservatives transferred 244 cases to criminal investigations, whereas we transferred 335 last year. Only 39 search warrants were executed—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Milton.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency and the minister have repeatedly promised an independent investigation into those evading taxes, those who, through the paradise papers, have become apparent.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister compromised this investigation when he waded into the Bronfman affair. He was so fast to exonerate his buddy, but the truth can no longer be denied.

Will the Prime Minister allow the CRA to do its job and investigate his friend, or is this just another case of one rule for the Liberals and another one for the rest of us?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance and to making the tax system fair and equitable for all Canadians. I can assure my colleagues opposite and all Canadians that nobody is above the law.

I am very proud of our country's leadership role internationally. Co-operation between revenue authorities, including the exchange of tax information, is an essential tool for maintaining the integrity of Canada's tax base.

* * *

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have yet again received some very bad news about ethics in the Liberal Party.

This morning, *The Globe and Mail* reported that Stephen Bronfman, the Liberal Party's chief fundraiser, had assets in tax havens, in the Cayman Islands. This despite his claim that he was no longer involved in that sort of thing. The Prime Minister wasted no time saying he believed him, that everything was fine and that Bronfman was beyond reproach.

Is the Prime Minister still proud of his bagman?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken concrete steps over the past two years to fight tax evasion and avoidance. We have invested close to \$1 billion in fighting tax evasion.

I find those accusations utterly ridiculous. I cannot comment on specific cases. As the members opposite are perfectly aware, the law prohibits me from doing so.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is ridiculous is that the Minister of National Revenue claims she cannot comment on this issue, yet her boss, the Prime Minister, did not seem too concerned when he commented on the whole bagman story. That is ridiculous.

The minister is an honourable woman, so she must see how ludicrous this all is. Can she rise and assure Canadians that the Bronfman case will get the appropriate scrutiny?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is strongly committed to combatting tax evasion, and the Canada Revenue Agency will treat all cases the same way.

The agency receives 30 million returns every year. As we work to protect Canada's tax base, all cases will be treated the same way. No one is above the law.

Oral Questions

● (1425)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when Stephen Bronfman was named in the paradise papers, he swore, hand on heart, that he had not had any involvement since 1998, in any way, directly or indirectly. However, today we learned that he still had ties to a trust in the Cayman Islands in 2005.

Here is a very simple multiple-choice question: a) Stephen Bronfman lied to the Prime Minister; b) the Prime Minister misled the House. Which answer is correct?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the role Canada has taken on the international stage. Co-operation between revenue authorities, including the exchange of tax information, is an essential tool for maintaining the integrity of Canada's tax base.

That is why, as of September 30, 2017, the agency was conducting more than 990 audits and 42 criminal investigations related to offshore financial structures. We continue to work on ensuring that our tax system is fair for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to think she is entitled to her own facts, but let us go through the facts.

The paradise papers initially revealed that Stephen Bronfman had ties to a trust in the Cayman Islands. Bronfman denied it and said he gave a loan that was quickly paid back by 1998. Well, that was false, because today we learned that as of 2005, there was still \$7 million outstanding on that loan.

The government seems to be very content to accept whatever fish tale their well-connected friends cook up. When will the minister understand that Canadians are fed up with this double standard?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one is above the law and no one is interfering with the CRA's investigations.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I just experienced myself, having participated in a planned hacking of my cellphone as part of a CBC/Radio-Canada report, Canada's networks are vulnerable. Phone conversations can be listened to and movements tracked. Every Canadian could be a potential target, from elected officials to business people.

While telecom companies have the capacity to beef up their security, what we need is leadership and legislation from the federal government.

Will the minister finally take Canadians' privacy seriously and modernize our laws?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this matter falls under the jurisdiction of CSE, the Communications Security Establishment. It,

indeed, has worked very closely with industry, including the service providers, to make sure they have the advice and the knowledge they need to correct the problem and to ensure the privacy of Canadians is secure.

If the telecoms need a little more encouragement, we would be pleased to give it to them.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the legislation falls under the responsibility of the current government and the House of Commons, and that is what we are asking the minister to review and modernize.

[Translation]

I appreciate the government's good intentions, but fine words are not the same as real action. Whether we are talking about Equifax, Uber, or even the Canada Revenue Agency, Canadians' personal information is often being put at risk. We need laws that require transparency and provide for fines. We are lagging far behind in this area.

Will the minister commit today to reviewing the legislation and finally modernizing the legislative framework in order to protect Canadians' privacy?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, that work is already under way. A cyber review has been conducted over the last number of months. The House can expect to see at least three different initiatives coming forward in the weeks and months immediately ahead, to establish a new policy framework, to provide a strategy that is geared to the 21st century, and a suite of initiatives that will ensure that Canada can be a leader in the forefront of the rest of the world. This is a vital area and we do, indeed, take it seriously.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 1, the Prime Minister said, "sunshine is the best disinfectant".

Today, Canadians all know that the Minister of Finance put himself in a direct conflict of interest with Bill C-27 and that he earned millions of dollars, a fact that he is now trying to sweep under the rug.

The Minister of Finance is the most senior minister in this country. He used his privileged position to grow his own fortune. He broke the trust of 35 million Canadians.

Will the Minister of Finance finally let the sun cast some light on his personal finances or will he continue to hide in the shadow of his many numbered companies?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable knows, every parliamentarian in the House, including ministers and parliamentary secretaries, are required to sit down with the Ethics Commissioner when they arrive in Ottawa and present their entire situation in order to determine the best course of action to take. The Minister of Finance did that. The Ethics Commissioner recommended that the Minister of Finance put in place a conflict of interest screen, which she felt was the best possible measure of compliance. That screen was put in place from the beginning. The minister has said that he is going to go above and beyond the commissioner's initial recommendations so that he can continue the important work he has been doing for Canadians for the past two years.

* * *

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after the paradise papers revealed the top Liberal fundraiser's connection to a Cayman Islands tax evasion scheme, he said “Stephen Bronfman had no other direct or indirect involvement whatsoever in the Kolber Trust”, that trust being located in the Cayman Islands. We now know that connection came in the form of a \$7 million loan that was still in place as of 2005.

Does the Prime Minister still believe Mr. Bronfman has no connection to this trust?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that this is a multi-billion-dollar issue, and we have invested nearly \$1 billion over the past two years to tackle it. The CRA uses the information it receives through lists shared by its international partners as part of the BEPS project. We have over 37 partners. That is why, as of September 30, 2017, the CRA was conducting more than 990 audits and 42 criminal investigations related to offshore financial structures. We are reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take appropriate action.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the original revelations about Stephen Bronfman's connections to a Cayman Islands tax haven came to light earlier this month, the Prime Minister said, “We have received assurances that all rules were followed...and we are satisfied with those assurances.”

Is the Prime Minister still satisfied with the assurances that his top fundraiser followed all the rules?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, these accusations are utterly ridiculous. No one is above the law, no one is interfering with the CRA's audits, and the law applies to everyone. No one is above the law.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I just heard the minister say that the allegations were completely

ridiculous. Her job is to ensure that her department conducts these investigations totally objectively, but she has now predetermined the outcome by declaring that the allegations are ridiculous.

How can Canadians have any assurance that there will be an honest investigation into Mr. Bronfman when both the Prime Minister and the minister have declared him not guilty?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, former national revenue minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn publicly admitted that this was not a priority for the former Conservative government. It is a priority for us, however. We have invested nearly \$1 billion. I said this before, and I cannot be more clear: no one is interfering with the CRA's audits.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has not retracted her comment. She seemed to suggest in her earlier answer that the allegations were completely ridiculous. Well, those allegations have not even been investigated yet by her department.

We have new revelations from the paradise papers, suggesting a link between Mr. Bronfman and this potentially illegal tax haven. How can the minister possibly think it appropriate for her to stand and exonerate him before her department has even had a chance to conduct its investigation?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one is above the law, and my colleague opposite knows perfectly well that I cannot comment on any case involving the 30 million people and companies that file tax returns.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1435)

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Speaker, we understand that this is a touchy subject for our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, given that fighting tax evasion was not a priority for their government, whereas we have made it a priority by investing \$1 billion.

We are targeting four jurisdictions a year and carrying out criminal investigations.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am looking for assurance here. Will the minister assure Canadians that neither she nor the Prime Minister will stand in the way of an investigation by her department into Mr. Bronfman.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to assure my colleague across the way by reiterating that no one is above the law and no one, and I mean no one, will interfere with the audits and investigations carried out by the CRA.

I trust that my colleague is reassured.

* * *

*[English]***HOUSING**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal government finally announced its housing strategy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for North Island—Powell River has the floor and I will allow her to restart if she likes, without the applause.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal government finally announced its national housing strategy, and you would be right to be confused, because earlier this month, when my bill on the right to housing was voted on, every single Liberal voted against it. In fact, the member for Cambridge called the right to housing a “legal risk”. The member for Spadina—Fort York called the right to housing a “slogan”.

For the NDP, the right to housing is never a partisan issue, so why did the government vote against it?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe that every Canadian deserves a home that is safe, affordable, and adequate. We want every Canadian to live somewhere that feels like home, so everyone has an equal chance to succeed in this country.

Our \$40 billion commitment over the next 10 years is historic. It is the longest and largest investment in public housing in the history of the country. It is framed in a human rights approach, which is now being praised by the United Nations as groundbreaking on the international scale.

I will read a quote quickly: “Congratulations and well done. Heck of an accomplishment on housing”. That was Joe Cressy, the NDP candidate I defeated to get into this place.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government did things backwards yet again with this new dog and pony show. The Government of Quebec is not too happy about it either.

When you cannot come to an agreement with partners as important as the provinces when you only shell out a quarter of the money that was announced, you do not go around bragging about how you invested \$40 billion in housing. What a load of hooey.

Will the government listen and respect the concept of asymmetry, or will it just impose its own decision yet again?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

Our department's first duty is to consult.

[English]

The NDP confuses me. The first question was that we are going too slowly, and now they say we are going too fast. I do not understand.

This is what we are doing. We are serving Canadians through a rights-based approach. There will be 385,000 people who will see their subsidies renewed. There will be close to 500,000 Canadians who will receive rent subsidies so they can now live in affordable and safe housing of their choice. There will be more than 100,000 people who will see new housing units built in the next 10 years, and close to 300,000 units will be repaired. This is the best policy a Government of Canada has ever produced, and I would be happy to walk her through her riding to show her where it is going to make real change.

* * *

● (1440)

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day brings more bad news for the Liberals about the Minister of Finance and his conflicts of interest.

The greatest irony is that every time we ask the Minister of Finance any questions, he says that we are attacking him personally, which is absolutely false. What we want to know, and what Canadians want to know, is what other conflicts of interest the Minister of Finance might be involved in with his many investments in numbered companies.

Will the Minister of Finance disclose all of his assets? Canadians might then be able to trust him.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Beauce has been here long enough to know that the institution responsible for preserving the integrity of Parliament is the Ethics Commissioner.

Ever since he first arrived here in Ottawa, the Minister of Finance has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner and presented his situation. She advised him on how to proceed. He announced that he would go even further by placing his assets in a blind trust and selling his shares in Morneau Shepell to continue the work he has been doing for the past two years for Canadians, which is looking after those whom the previous government neglected for 10 years, lifting 300,000 children out of poverty, and introducing the national housing strategy. That is what the Minister of Finance has done for the past two years now.

Oral Questions

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the finance minister works with the Ethics Commissioner after the fact, after he was caught. He forgot to disclose a villa in France, as well as shares in his family business, which he tried to hide in a numbered company.

Yes, the finance minister does work with the Ethics Commissioner, but after he gets caught, or after the fact. We do not trust the finance minister when it comes to his assets. That is why we tabled a motion in the House today to ensure that we know the full extent of the minister's assets and that there are no other conflicts of interest.

Could the finance minister disclose his assets to Canadians?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the institution responsible for maintaining the integrity of Parliament is the Ethics Commissioner. The finance minister has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that he complies with the rules governing the House and her recommendations, which he did by putting in place a conflict of interest screen, among other things. He announced that he would also divest himself of his shares in Morneau Shepell and place his assets in a blind trust. He is working with the Ethics Commissioner on this in order to continue the work he has been doing for Canadians for two years.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bruce Wayne said, "It's not who we are underneath, but what we do that defines us." The finance minister is defined by his conflict of interest. For two years, he held Morneau Shepell shares in a company that he both regulated and owned. There was no blind trust, no sign off from the Ethics Commissioner, and now he is under investigation yet again.

Will the finance minister finally open up the curtains and let the light shine in, or is he content to continue to keep Canadians in the dark night?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if it is true that we are defined by what we do and perhaps by what we do not do, what the finance minister has not done is to mismanage the economy the way they mismanaged it for 10 years. What he has done is create half a million jobs in this country, most of them full time; grow the economy at a faster pace than they ever could; reduce child poverty by 40%; reduce taxes for nine million Canadians; go back on the regressive policies they put forward, such as doubling the TFSA limit that would benefit the 3% of wealthiest Canadians, so we can give more to Canadians who need it the most; and yesterday we announced a national housing strategy they should have done a long time ago.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bruce Wayne also said that everything is impossible until somebody does it. Right now, it seems impossible for the finance minister to admit he was in a conflict of interest. It seems impossible for him to even acknowledge he is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner yet again.

Why will the finance minister not do what, up until now, has been impossible for him: be the hero that Canada needs now and reveal all of the assets he has been hiding in his other private numbered companies?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what was impossible for them for 10 years was to grow this economy. Remember, two years ago we were debating if we were in a recession or heading into a recession. No one is asking that question now, because Canada's economy is growing at the fastest pace in the G7. It is putting other countries to shame, and they are looking with envy at Canada because of the work of this finance minister. He has done this while reducing inequalities in this country, a good thing that never occurred to them.

* * *

● (1445)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals completed three rounds of preliminary talks for a possible free trade agreement with China. The media is saying that the Prime Minister plans to go to China by the end of the year, despite serious human rights concerns, lax labour laws, threats to Canadian intellectual property, and the list goes on.

Why is the Liberal Party moving full speed ahead to enter into a free trade agreement with China?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's progressive and strategically developed trade agenda draws on rules from throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Guided at all times by our values, it will eventually lead to new trade opportunities. Ignoring this market's tremendous potential for the middle class is neither realistic nor conducive to economic growth. Canadians expect us to engage in talks with China responsibly and in full knowledge of the facts. That is exactly what we intend to do for Canadians right across the country.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, China has no free press, torture is widespread, workers do not have a right to collective bargaining, businesses are worried about their intellectual property rights, and hundreds of human rights defenders and dissidents have been detained. China does not even have market economy status, which means we cannot possibly have a level playing field in a trade deal.

Oral Questions

The Liberals will not even stand up to unfair steel dumping by China that is costing jobs in our steel industry right now. How can Canadians possibly trust the government to defend Canadian values and jobs in any new trade negotiations with China?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world has seen that Canada will always stand up for Canadians when it comes to trade negotiations. They saw that in Asia last week.

Our government believes in a rules-based, progressive, and strategic trade agenda throughout the Asia-Pacific that helps create new opportunities for Canadians across this country. To dismiss the enormous potential this market represents for our middle class is unrealistic and is not a plan to grow the economy. We are engaged with the Asian region.

Farmers and workers across this nation expect this government to engage in trade in a progressive and inclusive fashion, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last few weeks as the chair of the all-party diabetes caucus, I have heard concerns from Canadians and stakeholders regarding access to the disability tax credit by type 1 diabetics. I appreciate the time the Minister of National Revenue and her parliamentary secretary took to meet with me to discuss the situation and to allow me to share the concerns I have heard.

Could the Minister of National Revenue inform the House on the steps she is taking to make sure that Canadians with disabilities have their concerns heard by the CRA?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brampton South for her question and for working so hard on behalf of her constituents. Our government pledged that the agency would administer measures for persons with disabilities in a fair, transparent, and accessible way. Today I am proud to announce that the disability advisory committee, which was disbanded by the former Conservative government, is being reinstated. By reinstating the committee, the agency will benefit from its advice about enhancing the quality and accessibility of the services it provides to persons with disabilities and their families.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to media reports, the information the minister shared yesterday about ISIS fighters is from late 2015. The minister misled the House. He said that our security agencies were monitoring terrorists who had returned to Canada, but that is not true. Our security agencies do not know how many of these traitors to the nation are roaming free or where they are.

Will the minister be honest with Canadians and give us the facts?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the statistics that I gave were accurate.

Canada works constantly with all of our allies, the Five Eyes, G7, Interpol, and others to know as much as possible about every threat. Our Canadian agencies constantly assess and reassess all the data in order to be effective and current in keeping Canadians safe, and they respond with a suite of measures, including investigations, surveillance, marshalling evidence, lifting passports, no-fly listings, threat reduction initiatives, and criminal proceedings whenever possible.

Our agencies do their job for Canadians 24-7, 365 days a year, and they do it extremely well.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not questioning the work our security agencies do. They are the best in the world. What I am questioning is what the minister told the House. The minister is an intelligent, well-informed man. Why did he mislead the House when he knows perfectly well that the information he provided yesterday is two years old? The numbers he shared were taken from statements made by the director of CSIS in March 2016. The minister needs to wake up, take this issue seriously, and give Canadians accurate information. We want to know where these traitors to the nation are and whether they are being monitored 24-7.

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for about the fourth or fifth time now, the fact of the matter is that the statistics I have cited in the House are accurate. The numbers today remain essentially the same as they were two years ago.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said that anyone who needs to be under surveillance is indeed under surveillance. He then gave a number of 60. However, the minister's own office said that this number came from a two-year-old report. Therefore, I guess it is accurate as of two years ago. How can the minister claim to be surveilling all ISIS fighters in Canada if he is using two-year-old data and saying it is accurate? Is he claiming that no new terrorists have entered Canada in the last two years or is he admitting that there are terrorists here that he is no longer watching?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the objective of the Government of Canada with respect to extremist travellers is to surveil them and contain them to ensure that they do not harm more people, and indeed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

The Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, and others, not to interrupt when someone else has the floor.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the objective of the Government of Canada is to surveil them and contain them to ensure that they do not harm more people, and indeed bring the full force of Canadian justice against them for fighting for a terrorist organization. I know the member for Calgary Nose Hill must agree with those words, because that is what she herself said word for word in this House last night.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the point that I have against the minister here, and the question that I have for him, is that he is saying that these figures are accurate, but he will not give the date as of when they are accurate. These are two-year-old numbers. He is standing up and saying that all of these people are under surveillance, but he will not give the number of people who are in Canada who have come in over the last two years. Therefore, very simply, how many people in this situation have come in over the last two years, and how many are under 24-hour surveillance?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is the number released by CSIS two years ago was in the order of 60, and it has confirmed that number remains essentially the same today. Whenever the security and police forces of our country recognize a threat, they take all appropriate measures to deal with that threat. It would have been helpful in these circumstances if the previous government had not cut a billion dollars from those services.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers are taking action.

Tomorrow, hundreds of seasonal workers will denounce with a single voice this government's inaction on the EI spring gap problem. The Liberals promised to help seasonal workers, but it has been two years, and nothing has been done.

In a few short months, workers and their families from the north shore and across Canada will have to get by without any income for several weeks. That is unacceptable.

Why are seasonal workers still waiting for help?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that Canadians get support when they need it. The series of changes that we have put into place to improve the EI program are benefiting Canadians across the country. More flexibility, more fairness, and a better service are what Canadians elected us for, and we are delivering. We are going to continue our work to ensure sound stewardship and accountability of the EI system while making it more simple and equitable for Canadian workers.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board ordered Kinder Morgan to stop installing plastic anti-salmon spawning mats in eight B.C. rivers, but two months later these mats are still in place. The Liberals need to enforce the law under the Fisheries Act and stop Kinder Morgan from wrecking salmon habitat. Our record low wild salmon returns will only get worse until the government starts taking meaningful action to save wild salmon. When will the minister enforce the law and stop Kinder Morgan from damaging critical salmon habitat?

• (1455)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that this government is working very hard to protect wild salmon stocks in this province. In fact, we are investing record amounts of money in marine and ocean science. We have a \$1.5-billion oceans protection program. My colleagues from British Columbia have talked to us constantly about world-class organizations like the Pacific Salmon Foundation. We will continue to do everything we need to do to protect wild salmon stocks in British Columbia.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, NAFTA is in crisis. This morning, an expert said that NAFTA is a sinking ship.

After five months and five rounds of negotiations, when will the minister admit that their plan is not working? When will the minister start fighting for jobs, not just for her ideology?

[English]

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of Canada's strengths in this difficult negotiation has been our ability to rise above petty partisan politics and to all play for team Canada. Having said that, Stephen Harper has recently proposed a different approach, and so I would like to take this opportunity to ask my hon. colleague to let his former boss know that this government's view is that capitulation is not a negotiating strategy.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am working hard to make sure that minister can return to asking the questions, but right now I am asking the questions.

After five months and five rounds of negotiations, NAFTA is at risk. The Prime Minister likes to suggest his strength is his progressive agenda, but in Washington the minister told our stakeholders that those will be non-enforceable, non-binding measures. Why is Canada putting non-binding priorities forward when it should be fighting for softwood, for auto, for agriculture, and for the jobs that we need?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our negotiating position is clear in Canada and at the negotiating tables in the United States and Mexico. We will defend and maintain those elements of NAFTA that Canadians know are essential to our national interest. We are negotiating in good faith and we expect our partners to do the same. A winner-take-all attitude is not the attitude of a good partner. I want Canadians to know that we will always defend the national interest and stand up for our values.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the answers we are hearing from the minister are not about charting a course to national success, they are about attacking a former prime minister and cynically pre-positioning Canada for failure. We have always taken a constructive approach and tried to work with the current government and we have advocated for Canada's position. Rather than pre-emptively deliver talking points explaining the Liberals' failure on NAFTA, we want to know when the minister will get serious and actually start fighting to protect the jobs of Canadian workers.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want Canadians and all members of this House to know that I take these negotiations absolutely seriously, as all Canadians expect of us. We made some reasonable progress on some of the more technical chapters at the latest round, but significant differences remain. We will never accept extreme proposals that harm the national interest, and I know Canadians are with us.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's first-ever national housing strategy was unveiled yesterday. As chair of the human resources committee, I know the issue of housing has dominated our work and is the number-one issue in my riding of Cambridge. The national housing strategy is a historic document for many reasons, including its recognition that every Canadian has the right to adequate housing. Could the minister responsible for housing explain this rights-based approach?

• (1500)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, housing rights are human rights, and I want to thank the member for Cambridge for drawing attention to this government's historic commitment to housing rights.

Our commitment is grounded in the principles of accountability, participation, and of course non-discrimination. We will be putting forward legislation that would require this government and future governments to maintain a national housing strategy now and into the future. We are establishing a community-based tenant fund for grassroots organizations so that people with lived experiences can help guide us through this process. We are creating a national housing council and appointing a federal housing advocate to ensure our policies are inclusive and accountable. We understand the importance of housing rights. We are matching our actions with words but, more important, our words are “finance” and “funded”. Let us get building.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the *Preserver* and the *Protecteur* out of service, the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence is warning that Canada urgently needs four auxiliary replenishment ships to provide fuel and equipment to ships. The Davie shipyard stands ready to meet that need.

What is this government waiting for to immediately commission the construction of a second replenishment ship? This is a national security issue.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has reiterated its commitment to the national shipbuilding strategy.

The strategy includes a \$2-billion small-ship construction program for competitive procurement among Davie and other Canadian shipyards other than the yards selected to build large vessels.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have a dismal record when it comes to defending official languages.

The media is reporting that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to be served in French when crossing the border. The number of complaints go up every year, and the worst part is that this is nothing new. The Canada Border Services Agency is a repeat offender. There are recurring problems there.

Did the minister responsible for official languages forget that it is her responsibility to ensure bilingual services in every government agency?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has a very important point. The official languages law is a fundamental law of this country, and every Canadian government agency has the duty and obligation to ensure that that law is followed meticulously. I will draw his question to the attention of the president of the CBSA.

* * *

[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Education Savings Week. We know that Canada's prosperity hinges on the ability of our young people to gain the skills and experience they need to start their career.

Families who save for their children's education give them a better chance of graduating without incurring significant debt.

Business of the House

Can the minister tell us about the measures being taken in the House to ensure that our families are able to save for their children's education?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the one millionth child received the Canada learning bond, meaning one million Canadian families have had a head start for their child's education.

Making post-secondary education more affordable for Canadians is critical to helping them find a good job in their future. The Canada learning bond gives low-income families up to \$2,000 to save for their children's future studies.

We will keep working to make sure that more Canadians than ever can access post-secondary education.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few months, the Liberals have demonstrated, time and time again, they are desperate for new revenue to pay for their reckless spending.

Now, today, the PBO confirmed that the finance minister's tax changes will pull an additional \$6 billion out of businesses over the next decade. The Coalition for Small Business Tax Fairness has called for a full economic analysis to be released.

Surely the minister has done this assessment. Will the minister now release this analysis so Canadians can learn how many jobs are at risk as a result of these changes?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the report of the parliamentary budget officer, who is confirming what we have been saying all along, that 3% of Canadian-controlled private corporations hold more than 80% of all the passive income in Canada and that 97% of Canadian-controlled private corporations will not be affected by these changes.

Our objective has always been to improve tax fairness.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning on the radio, the Minister of Transport suggested that people are at the same risk from small knives as they are from being smothered by a pillow. However, small knives are still on the ICAO's list of high-risk items, whereas pillows are not. According to the ICAO, there is no obligation to standardize the high-risk items not allowed on planes.

Will the minister finally recognize that he is allowing small knives on planes just to pander to his base?

● (1505)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, air safety is a very serious issue. That is why our

government's security experts carefully examined the issue of small knives.

What is more, experts from other countries have come to the same conclusion. That includes France, Germany, Great Britain, Portugal, Spain, Italy, New Zealand, Iceland, and others.

We checked.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is just as effective as a pillow in putting us to sleep.

According to LCN, the transport minister's office recently met with representatives of the Sikh community, and it just so happens that they talked about kirpans on planes. Coincidentally, the World Sikh Organization of Canada welcomed the decision of the minister and Transport Canada.

Does the Minister of Transport really believe that allowing small knives on planes will make passengers safer?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our decision is based on a periodic review of permitted and prohibited items. Our objective is to ensure airline safety. It has nothing to do with the interests of a particular group.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Now I believe the hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope has the usual Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons what business will be in the House for the remainder of this week and next week.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue the debate begun this morning on the Conservative Party's opposition motion.

Tomorrow, we will have the second and last day of debate at third reading stage of Bill C-45 on cannabis.

Monday, we will resume debate on Bill C-59 concerning national security. We will then move on to the report stage of Bill C-63 on the budget.

[*English*]

We will continue with debate of Bill C-63 on Tuesday.

On Wednesday and Thursday, we shall take up debate on the Senate amendments relating to Bill S-3, the Indian Act, unless we can get it done sooner.

I should also note that we will have the LGBTQ2 apology next Tuesday, November 28, immediately following question period.

*Business of Supply***HOUSE OF COMMONS**

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the “House of Commons Report to Canadians 2017”.

Also, it seems that I should remind members—and perhaps those staff members who are listening could pass this on to them—that in this House we do not pass between a person speaking and the Speaker.

Canadians, and I would hope the government would reflect upon that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the opposition motion calling on the finance minister to finally act in the interests of full disclosure.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FINANCE MINISTER'S ASSETS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: There are two minutes remaining in questions and comments following the speech by the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, but I will first allow him to answer the question he was asked just before question period.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member had asked about some of the holdings from which the finance minister and his family have the benefit. I am going to let people arrive at their own conclusions on those, but when we see very expensive yachts that are registered in foreign jurisdictions, it shows that they obviously know how to plan, how the rules are set up, and how to arrange their affairs so that they are probably tax efficient.

Again, I have said a number of times today that the finance minister is an intelligent person. If he is aware of how to conduct himself with tax efficiency and within the rules of international waters when it comes to yachts, surely he can navigate the system of accountability that we have here and show Canadians that he has their interests at heart, and not his own. When we make a commitment to the House, not just as members of Parliament but as ministers of the crown or parliamentary secretaries, we take a second oath that says that we will not profit from our own offices. This is how ministers or parliamentary secretaries start, and Canadians expect, when that oath is taken, that they will exercise it with utmost discretion and duty.

• (1510)

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we look at the finance minister putting forward Bill C-27, being fined \$200 because of his place in France, and saying everything would be in a blind trust when it was not, those things seem to erode the trust of the Canadian people. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. One of the reasons we have a very vibrant Canadian democracy, the Westminster system, is that there is expected accountability with responsible government. That means that each one of us is charged with asking questions about the personal conduct of someone discharging his or her ministerial duties. The minister, time and time again, does so and does not respond in a way that allows for confidence to be forthcoming from not just the opposition but from

There is a well-regarded book called *The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day* by David Hand. According to the author, there are five laws contributing to the improbability principle. There is the law of inevitability, the law of truly large numbers, the law of selection, the law of the probability lever, and the law of near enough.

What is the improbability principle? Mr. Hand states it as follows: extremely improbable events are commonplace. Mr. Hand's theory has been proven by the actions of the Liberal government, and if by some miraculous coincidence Mr. Hand is watching CPAC at this exact moment, he is welcome for the book plug and for proving him right. How? Well, however improbable it would seem that the Prime Minister would go on a record promise-making spree so soon after being elected, Hand argues that it was always possible and indeed probable. For example, this is the very first time in Canadian history that both the Prime Minister and the finance minister are both being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner at the same time. Now, before Mr. Hand gets too big an ego, I think every Canadian knew that the Liberals' ethical lapses were inevitable long before he noted the first law of inevitability.

I suppose it was also inevitable that, in response to questions from the opposition about the finance minister's scandals, the Prime Minister would deflect by chalking up our questions to mudslinging and petty politics. Well, if it is mudslinging and petty to point out that the government is acting unethically for its members' personal gain, then I proudly wear those labels. However, dismissing our concerns as matters not to be discussed in the House is shameful.

Just because the Liberals do not like talking about their unethical actions, it does not mean they have any right to dismiss legitimate concerns as distractions. It does not mean the finance minister has the right to run away from journalists' questions saying that he does not report to journalists. It does not mean the Prime Minister has the right to dismiss questions as mudslinging, and neglect to provide an answer. In doing so, the Prime Minister and the entire Liberal government show complete disrespect and contempt for this institution, for accountability, for the opposition, and fundamentally for Canadians themselves by dismissing questions about their ethics as mere distractions, mudslinging, or petty politics.

Business of Supply

This arrogance is typical of the Liberal government. Its members believe they are above the law. They believe that it is not wrong as long as they smile. However, by dismissing ethics and conduct as irrelevant, the Liberals forget that they are accountable to Canadians through their responsibility to the House, and they must answer for their unethical and law-breaking decisions, whether they like it or not.

The government seems tired of deflecting questions about the finance minister's ethics, but there is a simple solution. If the finance minister does not want to answer questions about his financial holdings and whether he benefits from government legislation that he actually creates, then he should just not own stock in companies impacted by his decisions. He should fully disclose the assets he owns and controls.

What is in the numbered companies that he is trying so hard to hide? Is he voting for legalizing pot because he has shares in a pot company? Is he handing out millions of taxpayers' dollars in bonuses for Bombardier because he is a shareholder? How about some engineering companies or others that stand to gain from the new infrastructure bank? With his disdain for ethics displayed so far, Canadians have every right to second guess his every move.

This solution applies to the entire government caucus. If the Prime Minister does not want to answer questions about using enormous amounts of taxpayers' money to fund his vacations to billionaire island, then he should not take expensive vacations on the taxpayers' dime. If the Liberals do not want to talk about broken promises, they should just stop breaking promises. However, that is the problem with the government. The Liberals promise to act ethically, openly, and with an eye to accountability, but as with so many promises to date, they cast aside any casual nod to openness and transparency the moment it becomes inconvenient to be honest.

It has been apparent from day one that "open by default" is just another promise to be broken once in power, but let us let the Liberal record speak for itself.

A year ago we were talking about the cash-for-access fundraisers. The Liberals were selling government access for donations but bowed under political pressure once they realized they could no longer pretend they were not wrong, promised to do better, and then went right back to selling access. The Liberals were forced to back down from expensing limousine travel to the taxpayer. If it were not for the "petty" opposition, the Liberals would still be charging Canadians absurd amounts for limo rentals. Last Christmas, the Prime Minister took a private helicopter to billionaire island for a vacation, compliments of a registered lobbyist, and then he failed to disclose the true cost to taxpayers.

• (1515)

If it were not for the mudslinging of the opposition and pressure from the media, we would not have any idea that the Prime Minister broke the law by flying in a private helicopter and accepting a gift from a registered lobbyist.

Earlier this year, the President of the Treasury Board introduced reforms to the Access to Information Act, which the Information Commissioner herself deemed regressive. The minister was

supposedly open to amendments, cue the smile, but then summarily dismissed the majority of our substantial amendments to the act.

Recently the government operations and estimates committee tabled a unanimous report recommending a substantial overhaul of the whistle-blower act. The Treasury Board president promptly blew off the proposed overhaul, instead opting to limit any reforms to minor tweaks, the type of reform that every expert warned was insufficient to protect whistle-blowers.

I want to quote one witness who was at OGGO to provide a human aspect to the government's broken promise. David Yazbeck, a whistle-blower advocate, stated in committee:

...if I can be a little strong and almost emotional here...whistle-blowers are heroes. They risk their families, they risk their careers, and they risk financial stability in order to make the operation of government better and therefore improve the lives of Canadians.

The system...doesn't work. It needs to be fixed. This committee has a golden opportunity to do that. I would urge you to listen to people like us and do that. This is not only better for whistle-blowers. This is also better for Canadians.

In response to a motion I tabled asking the Treasury Board president to appear in committee to detail the concrete actions the government plans on taking to protect whistle-blowers, the Liberal committee members voted it down.

The Liberal record of closed-by-default and broken promises continues with the finance minister's recent troubles. After having been fined \$200 for breaking the law, the minister is trying to pretend that he has done nothing wrong. Given that there were actual punitive actions taken against him, he is deliberately misleading the House and Canadians as a whole when he says that he has always acted according to the law.

The Liberals promised to do better. They promised to go above the spirit of the law, but the fine from the Ethics Commissioner shows that the government is not even willing to follow the letter of the law. There is no one, save for this government, that would defend its actions, yet every day, the Liberals continue their charade and pretend that they are on the side of the angels. They make promises they have no intention of keeping, accuse the opposition of being petty for, heaven forbid, opposing their agenda, and dismiss any legitimate questions about their lack of ethics as distractions not worthy of this place.

Business of Supply

Canadians deserve better. The finance minister will not even apologize for breaking the law, let alone for misleading the House about his actions and hiding his assets. He spent months attacking small business owners as tax cheats for trying to escape the death grip of taxes being imposed by the government, when it turns out that he is doing the exact thing he has accused others of. Again, he refuses to apologize.

The finance minister claimed that now that he has divested his ownership of Morneau Shepell, he can act freely and without conflict. He does not seem to realize that he has implicitly admitted to being in conflict for the past two years of his mandate. Since September, it has been surprising revelation after revelation for the minister. Hand's law of inevitability has proved true.

Again, it is a simple solution. He could prevent any future surprises just by fully disclosing his assets, as promised by the Liberals and demanded by the Prime Minister of his entire cabinet. Looking at the Liberal's mandate letter tracker, under "don't break conflict of interest laws and make millions on a company you legislate", we can consider this one "under way with challenges".

This is why we work to demand accountability from the government, why we hold its feet to the fire every day in question period, and why we will not back down from making the Liberals answer for their betrayal of the trust of Canadians.

The mandate letter tracker is a shining example of Orwellian doublespeak, Liberal spin, and the government's inability to police itself. Therefore, we will continue to keep asking the finance minister what else he is hiding in his numbered companies.

When we look at the Liberal government, like all Liberal governments we all know, some familiar themes keep popping up. When challenged, they hide behind the lowest standard. They deflect questions of integrity and ethics and act like rules are for the little people and not themselves. That is all very Liberal and all very inevitable indeed.

• (1520)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. It was interesting, kind of all over the place, as if it was written by a Conservative talking points generator, going from one hit to the next.

What the hon. member did not mention was an economy that is on fire, that is performing the best in the G7. He also mentioned promises not being kept, but a promise was delivered yesterday on working for the most vulnerable and delivering on housing. Perhaps he could comment on that, or the Canada child benefit that reduced child poverty by 40%.

A lot of the promises we made are promises we delivered for working and middle-class Canadians. We will continue to do that under the minister's plan and oversight.

I wonder if he could comment on that and the great work the minister is doing and how we are sticking to our plan to help the most vulnerable in the country.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, in the last 30 seconds of my speech, I said that when Liberal governments are caught being Liberals, they hide behind the lowest standard and deflect questions

on ethical integrity. Here we have a perfect example. Just seconds after I finished my speech about how the government deflects from its ethics and its issues, instead of answering the question about the lack of ethics of this finance minister, the Prime Minister, and the Liberal government, the member deflected and asked other questions.

I wish colleagues on the other side would actually answer a question about the ethical failings of the finance minister, which is addressed in the opposition day motion.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I usually do not support Conservative motions. That has certainly been my trend over the past few years, because quite often, I disagree with them. However, the motion today is to call on the finance minister to reveal assets he has bought, sold, or held within his private companies or trust funds since he became finance minister to determine if there are any conflicts. I am surprised that we even have to debate this or even have to bring forward a motion like this to push the finance minister to do the right thing. This is something he should have done years ago.

Why does the member think the finance minister is refusing to do the right thing and reveal his assets?

• (1525)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I used to work in Burnaby. It is a wonderful part of British Columbia. I would like to go back there one day, perhaps when my colleague is done.

To be honest, I think the finance minister is not revealing what he is holding because he is obviously afraid to reveal the information. He was afraid to reveal that he was holding a mansion, a villa, in France. He was afraid to reveal that he was actually holding shares in his own company, held within, using a loophole, a numbered company that he completely held 100% of and controlled himself. I think he is evidently hiding something. I mentioned in my speech that perhaps he bought stock in pot shares. Perhaps he bought shares in other companies he financially regulates himself. I think the minister is hiding something, because he is afraid to come clean with Canadians.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, repeatedly today, during the speeches by our Liberal colleagues, they pointed out a very rosy picture of our economy, yet we know that the average family is paying \$840 more in taxes than it was two years ago when the Liberals took office. In fact, 81% of middle-class families are paying more in taxes today than they were under our government. The Liberals have continually tried to divert the topic back to their supposedly rosy picture.

Business of Supply

With the motion before us today, we are asking the minister to simply open up the curtain to let the sunshine in as a good disinfectant. Could my colleague comment on whether his constituents have contacted him about the egregious errors of our Liberal finance minister and how that is impacting the level of trust Canadians have in their elected officials?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are very fond of quoting Louis Brandeis and his “Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants” quote, but they never mention the first part of the quote, which is, “Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases.” That is what we are facing here. The Liberals always try to deflect from the publicity on what is going on with the finance minister.

When I go back to my community in Edmonton West, it is at the top of people's minds that they are paying more in taxes, that there are attacks on their small businesses, and that type 1 diabetics are being asked to pay more, but at the same time, the finance minister is using his powers to shield his own wealth from Canadians. They have lost faith in the finance minister. They have lost trust in the Liberal government.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in this House and speak to Canadians about the hard work the Minister of Finance is doing for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The motion says “sunshine is the best disinfectant”. That is why on October 19, 2015, after 10 years of cloudy skies, people in Canada voted for real change and let the sun shine in. Let me repeat that: let the sun shine in.

We have been clear right from the beginning that the economy needs to work for the middle class and those working hard to join it. This is a must. My parents immigrated to this country, because they knew that in this country, there were rules, and as long as one followed the rules and worked really hard, they could be successful. That is why we have had a clear focus to ensure that hope and hard work succeeds for Canadians all across this country.

First we introduced a middle-class tax cut, which continues to benefit nearly nine million Canadians. Then we introduced the Canada child benefit, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. Compared to the previous system, in which child benefits were not targeted and were given to millionaires, the CCB is an after-tax targeted benefit that is helping a lot of families, including in my riding of Brampton East, where almost \$10 million has been given to Canadian families in need of additional assistance.

In the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance announced the government's intention to accelerate the indexation of the CCB by two years, to July 2018. This simply means better support sooner to ensure that the CCB continues to play a vital role in helping low- and middle-income Canadian families with children.

This was announced less than a month ago, and I had the honour and privilege of hosting the Right Hon. Prime Minister in my riding. He met with families in my riding that had young children, who thanked him for the investments in families with the Canada child benefit. It was a great day.

Every time I get up in this House, I invite all members to my riding, especially the Speaker, because it is a wonderful place. We run basketball camps on Sundays. I want to see the Speaker there shooting some hoops with the people of Brampton East.

Moving right along, we also announced the government's historical agreement with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan. At maturity, it will increase the maximum retirement benefit by about 50%. In today's dollars, that represents an increase of nearly \$7,000, to a maximum benefit of around \$20,000. With the recent action by the Government of Quebec to enhance the Quebec pension plan in a similar fashion, Canadians from coast to coast to coast can now look forward to a safer, more dignified retirement.

Our government knows that those working hard to join the middle class can face financial barriers to joining or rejoining the workforce. That is why, as part of our agreement to enhance the Canada pension plan, we increased the working income tax benefit. Because the economy is growing, we are doing even more to help those working to join the middle class. In the fall economic statement, the government announced its intention to further enhance the WITB by an additional \$500 million per year. This will provide even greater support for current recipients and will ensure that more workers can qualify.

In the fall economic statement, the government also announced its plan to reduce the small business tax rate. By doing this, the government will help small business grow and create jobs. The small business rate will be lowered to 10% just five weeks from now and to 9% a year from now, in 2019. This means up to \$7,500 in federal corporate tax savings per year to help entrepreneurs and innovators do what they do best.

Small businesses are a key driver of our economy and a cornerstone of our communities across this country. As our plan works to grow the economy, small businesses see the benefits of that growth with lower taxes. As we lower taxes on small businesses, we are committed to ensuring that low taxes support businesses, business growth, and investment and do not give personal tax advantages to the wealthy over the middle class.

● (1530)

We inherited a system that encourages wealthy individuals to incorporate in order to pay less tax. This means someone making \$300,000 can save about as much on tax as the average Canadian who earns \$48,000. We are making changes to address tax advantages that only the richest individuals using high-priced accountants can take advantage of.

We have listened to small business owners, professionals, farmers, and fishers and will move forward in a way that protects small businesses, the middle class, and innovators and entrepreneurs.

Business of Supply

There is more. Budget 2017 also laid out the government's plan to invest \$81 billion over 11 years in public transit, and in green infrastructure, social infrastructure, and transportation infrastructure in support of trade in rural and northern communities—

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know you allow a lot of leeway, but there is an issue of relevance here. The member has not once discussed the motion in front of us today.

The Deputy Speaker: This point of order occurred earlier in the day.

Members will know of course that the Standing Orders are clear on the issue of relevance. I note that the member is six minutes into his 20-minute speech and he did cite one phrase from the motion.

For the hon. member's benefit, and others for that matter, members agreeably are given considerable latitude in coming around to the motion that is before the House. It is difficult for chair occupants, as one cannot judge relevance until such time as members have had an opportunity to present their arguments. Sufficient time needs to transpire until we see where the member is going.

What is important is that before the member presents a continuation, or a theme of arguments, shall I say, it would be good to introduce at the outset how that particular set of arguments applies to the question that is before the House. The member may want to think of that and incorporate that into his remarks. I am not here to tell him how to frame his arguments, but certainly that would be one way to make the relevance connection.

The hon. member for Brampton East.

•(1535)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I feel like I am back at law school, so thank you so much for the lesson on how to present an argument. In his point of order, my hon. colleague said I was not being relevant, but the fact of the matter is that the first six minutes was just my preamble. I will get into it.

We started by saying that sunshine is the best disinfectant. The Ethics Commissioner has a role to play and we all respect her for the great job she does in ensuring that all members of the House, including ministers, the Prime Minister, opposition members, members on the backbench, members of the third party, and independent members, are held to high ethical standards. All members are elected to the House by great Canadians and sit down with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure they are onside and do not have any conflicts of interest with their government and parliamentary work.

The Minister of Finance proactively sat down with the Ethics Commissioner when he was elected as the MP for Toronto Centre, and subsequently appointed as the Minister of Finance. He followed her advice. He set up a conflict screen and he went forward building a stronger economy for Canadians. That is simply what the matter is about. There is a set of rules. The minister followed those rules. He met with the Ethics Commissioner. She provided a recommendation and he followed that recommendation and went on to build a great economy in the last two years.

That is the problem, and I get it. When I was in opposition, I was an innocent bystander. I have had the great fortune of being in politics since I was age 19, including as a volunteer. When members are on the opposite side of government, it is frustrating, especially being on the opposite side of our government, which has the fastest growing economy in the G7, has created 500,000 new jobs, has cut taxes for the middle class, has reduced taxes for small businesses, and increased the Canada child benefit and lifted 300,000 children out of poverty.

Of course, people will find things to talk about. Opposition members love to talk about relevancy. The Ethics Commissioner did her job. The Minister of Finance followed her recommendation and now is focused on making sure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast have an opportunity to work hard and succeed. That is what we are focused on, and opposition members can focus on distracting us, but it is not going to work. We have seen this song and dance before, and that is why sunny days started on October 19, 2015, and will continue for years to come.

With the budget, the government showed its commitment to put together a new housing strategy to help ensure that Canadians have more affordable housing meeting their needs. Yesterday, the right hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development announced how they would make housing more affordable for Canadians. Canada's first ever national housing strategy is a 10-year, \$40 billion plan that will give Canadians a place to call home. It will promote diverse communities and will build housing that is sustainable and accessible.

All of the government's investments to date are having a real impact on Canadians and our economy. The Canadian economy is the fastest growing economy of the G7 countries. How come the opposition never likes to talk about that? The Canadian economy has created over 500,000 jobs since our government was elected in 2015.

I am hearing a little heckling from my NDP colleagues, so I would love to remind them that the Canada child benefit, which has directly helped to lift 300,000 children out of poverty, is something that party voted against. Until they can come full circle and realize that they voted against middle-class tax policies, they really should not throw stones when they live in a glass house. Among young Canadians, the unemployment rate is the lowest on record. Labour market participation among working age women is at an all-time high. Canada also has the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio among the G7. According to projections by private sector economists, in just five years from now, the federal debt-to-GDP ratio could be at its lowest level in 40 years. Our plan is working, but we are not done yet.

•(1540)

As we look forward to the future and our next federal budget, the government remains focused on how best to grow the Canadian economy, and how to make sure that the growth benefits all Canadians. That means it will continue to make smart investments in people and communities, to ensure continued progress for the middle class and—

Business of Supply

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hate to raise this point of order again, but my colleague assured all of us that he was just in his preamble earlier when he had not yet referred to the motion before us, other than that one phrase. Therefore, I would ask you to call my colleague to order.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for again bringing this to the attention of the House.

I ask the hon. member for Brampton East to bring his commentary around to the motion in front of the House. We have about six and a half minutes remaining. I am sure he will do his best to do just that.

The hon. member for Brampton East.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely would love to repeat myself.

An hon. member: Yes, you would. It is also against the rules.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Raj Grewal: Again, the hon. member from York—Simcoe should speak when he is spoken to. He has had opportunities to rise in this House and ask a question. In six and a half minutes, I look forward to his rising to ask me a question. I will be happy to answer it.

More importantly, the Ethics Commissioner was appointed with a mandate to ensure that no member of Parliament violates the conflict of interest rules, whether he or she is a backbencher, minister, the Prime Minister, an independent member of Parliament, or any of the 338 members who serve in this House and were duly elected in a democracy. The Ethics Commissioner is independent of this House of Commons, which we respect.

The hon. member from Toronto Centre was elected and appointed as the Minister of Finance. He met with the Ethics Commissioner proactively. The commissioner wrote instructions to him, which he followed, and then he focused on building a stronger economy for Canadians.

I understand why the opposition does not want to talk about this, because it is nothing but good news on the economy, again and again. This is because the unemployment rate is going down and more jobs are being created, amounting to half a million jobs, with the strongest growth rate in 10 years. That is why my colleagues on the other side of the House keep on coming up with fancy words, word play, and trying to distract Canadians. They are not going to distract our government or divide us. That is the politics of the Harper regime.

We are focused on sunny ways. We know that sunshine is the best disinfectant. That is why we are focusing on growing a strong economy. It means that we continually have to make smart investments in people and communities to ensure continued progress for the middle class, and to make investments in lifelong learning to give Canadians the tools they need. It also means ensuring that government's policy and budgetary decisions consider the impact on both genders and advance gender equality.

I think I have tabled more proof than we need that the Minister of Finance and the Government of Canada are doing a great job for Canadians.

Since coming to office, the Minister of Finance has focused on improving the lives of the middle class. Under his leadership we will continue to ensure that Canadians who work hard will have an opportunity to succeed, to ensure that we protect the most vulnerable people in our society, and to ensure that we give an opportunity to all Canadians from coast to coast to coast to achieve their very own Canadian dream.

● (1545)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had told the member that if he said nice things to *Maclean's* about me, that I would not ask him any more tough questions. However, I have to renege on that deal, and I am sorry. That member is a friend, though, so I will do him this credit. If the Prime Minister is looking for a new finance minister sometime soon, he might consider the member for Brampton East. I look forward to responding to his invitation to again come to Brampton East. It is one of my favourite places to knock on doors. There is such a positive response to the Conservative message there. I just love going there again and again, and I can assure him I will continue to do that.

The member did not say much about the ethical failures of the finance minister. He did talk about some other issues related to the economy. He should know that under Stephen Harper, Canada had the lowest debt to GDP ratio, the best economic growth record, and the best job-creation record in the G7. Here is another critical difference. Stephen Harper had a plan to balance the budget and we got to a balanced budget, and we did it through a recession.

About the issue of the small business tax cut, the Liberal government promised to follow through on what the Conservatives had done already which was to continue to move the small business tax rate to 9%. Then it reneged on that promise. Then, in response to strong advocacy for small business by the official opposition, the finance minister said that the promise was back on. It is still in the future, but it is back on.

Are the Liberals going to renege on this promise again? Does the member want to address this on again, off-again plan for the future?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a friend. Those comments about him in *Maclean's* were true and honest. I congratulate him on his award and for the good work he does for his constituents. I do welcome him back to Brampton East. The more he comes, the more my margin of victory increases. Therefore, I consider it a bonus if he comes by Brampton East, and I hope he comes more often.

The member spoke about the small business tax rate. We on this side of the House understand that small businesses need a strong economy. We are reducing the small business tax rate from 10% to 9%, and we look forward to doing that.

At the same time, we are making investments in infrastructure, in communities, and in families which benefit small businesses. We are all trying to ensure they do very well. That is why they benefit from the fastest-growing economy in the G7. That is why they benefit from the 500,000 jobs have been created. That is why they benefit from the Canada child benefit to ensure that 300,000 children are lifted out of poverty. That is why they benefit from the further indexation of the Canada child benefit.

Business of Supply

It is always nice to review with the hon. member that the small business tax rate should be at 9%. I look forward to hosting him and his growing family in my riding very soon.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to get this straight. When the finance minister was elected, he put his \$21 million in Morneau Shepell shares into a numbered company in Alberta, and that company has made \$5 million since he was elected. In fact, we have learned that the minister's investments grew 5% the day that Bill C-27 was tabled, which benefited Morneau Shepell.

The member seems to think that this is okay, that the recommendations were made by the Ethics Commissioner. Maybe he can clarify this. Did the Ethics Commissioner recommend to the finance minister that he take his Morneau Shepell shares, put them in Alberta into a numbered company, and use this loophole so he could protect his assets? It would be nice to get clarification on this. While I am at it, I would like the member to tell me whether anyone in his riding has said that he or she thinks this ethical and okay?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that this is what happened. In fact, I have already mentioned that the member for Toronto Centre was elected in the 2015 election. He was subsequently appointed as Minister of Finance. He met with the Ethics Commissioner, who governs all members of Parliament, except for maybe the leader of the NDP who is not a member of Parliament yet. However, otherwise all MPs are governed by the Ethics Commissioner. The Minister of Finance was provided recommendations, those recommendations were followed, and the rule of law was maintained. That is why the Minister of Finance has been focused on growing the economy.

I understand why the NDP cannot stand that, because at the end of the day, we are actually making contributions and helping families. People in Brampton East are happy with me. The member is more than welcome to come to my riding and participate in 2019.

• (1550)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Confucius was known to say “Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance.”

I would like to hear some real knowledge, because the real knowledge we know is that the conflict of interest rules for federal legislators state that the methods of available control for conflicts of interest are disclosure, we know the minister did not do that; avoidance, we know the minister did not do that; and withdrawal, which really means recusal, and it appears the minister did not do that either.

Could the member comment on the question today, which pertains to these issues?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I just do not understand why the opposition does not get it.

The Ethics Commissioner is appointed to ensure all members of Parliament follow the rules. The member for Toronto Centre was elected. He was appointed to cabinet. He met with the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner gave him advice. He followed that advice. He went on to focus on growing the economy,

covering his mandate as the Minister of Finance, ensuring we had the fastest growing economy in the G-7.

Again, the members opposite can keep focusing on what they have to focus on, but we are going to focus on Canadian families. The Minister of Finance is doing a great job.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Brampton East for his passion and energy, and his public service.

Today's motion really is a product of the ideological residue of the former regime. The previous government refused to believe that investments would pay off. It refused to give Canadians credit for the idea that when we invested in them, they would do well.

We have made social and economic investments, which the Minister of Finance is putting forward with the same passion reflected by my colleague from Brampton East, the same passion for public service.

When my colleague goes knocking on doors in his riding, what does he hear about the work of our Minister of Finance, his commitment to public service, and the compound effect of the investments, which my colleague described so well, we have made in Canadians in social structure and in our economic future?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, that question gives me an opportunity to talk about the people of Brampton East, the fine people who gave me an opportunity to come serve in the House and achieve my very own Canadian dream.

I go knocking on doors on a weekly basis. When I talk to my constituents, they are supportive of the direction of our government. They appreciate the small business tax cuts. They appreciate the Canada child benefit, which is more money after tax to more families that need it. They appreciate the national housing strategy to ensure that all Canadians can have access to affordable housing. They appreciate our work to grow the fastest economy in the G-7. They appreciate our investments in infrastructure, which are making a difference in the lives of citizens in Brampton. They appreciate that their voices are being heard in Ottawa, as opposed to 10 years where only Ottawa's messages were being pushed down to Brampton.

That is why they are supportive of not only the Liberal government, but also their member of Parliament who has always been accessible to them. I always ensure that no matter what, I will never forget that they gave me an opportunity to serve. I will always be there to fight for their lives.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sitting here listening to the arrogance dripping from the other side.

I am very curious if, when there is knocking on door, people who have public pensions, people who are part of organized labour are telling the member how much they love Bill C-27 and how much they love that the minister has put this on the table.

I do understand why the member does not want to stay on topic, does not want to answer questions, because, to be quite honest, it is indefensible. Here is the question, and I would like the answer to be yes or no.

Business of Supply

When the member ran in 2015, did he promise his voters that a Liberal finance minister would take advantage of an ethical rule loophole, all the while misleading everyone into believing his assets were in a blind trust, yes or no?

• (1555)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can ask her leader what Brampton East is all about, because he consistently knocked on doors against me in 2015. What happened was that I got 52% of the vote, and I think that party got 22% of the vote.

What the people of Brampton East want, what all Canadians from coast to coast to coast want is a stronger economy. That is exactly what we are delivering for Canadians. We are delivering a stronger middle class and a better Canada child benefit. I would welcome the hon. member to my riding whenever she wants to come there. I would love to go door knocking with her.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[English]

Today, we have the honour to debate a motion that was put forward by the opposition, which reads:

That the House agree with the Prime Minister's statement in the House on November 1, 2017, that "sunshine is the best disinfectant"; and call on the Finance Minister to reveal all assets he has bought, sold or held within...his private companies or trust funds since he became Finance Minister, to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

I would also like to read a quote from the Prime Minister, which states, "he trust Canadians have in public institutions—including Parliament—has, at times, been compromised. By working with greater openness and transparency, Parliament can restore it."

That is what is happening today. Parliament is overseeing and debating a motion that seeks to restore what has been compromised by the finance minister over the past couple of years.

I have another quote from the Prime Minister, which states:

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Those are the words of the Prime Minister to the finance minister in his mandate letter.

We are speaking on this subject today, because the finance minister has broken trust with Canadians through a pattern of perhaps half-truths or premeditated dishonesty, we do not know for sure. However, for two years the finance minister held shares, worth approximately \$20 million, in Morneau Shepell, a company that he now regulates as finance minister. He held these shares outside of a blind trust, despite his colleagues, on both sides of the House, believing his shares were in a blind trust.

While he held these shares, the finance minister introduced Bill C-27, which would create a targeted benefit pension plan. TBPs are

highly specialized products offered by, guess who, Morneau Shepell. Only after the finance minister was revealed to be not holding his assets in a blind trust did he acknowledge any wrongdoing and agree to sell those assets.

The finance minister is under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner for tabling Bill C-27 while continuing to hold shares in Morneau Shepell. The Prime Minister and the finance minister are two of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, officials in the country. Canadians must trust that they will act in the public interest rather than in their own private personal interest.

As the Prime Minister has said, sunshine is the best disinfectant. Therefore, let us throw open the shades and reveal the assets of the finance minister.

To quote the Prime Minister again, he stated, "Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest." That is from the Prime Minister to the finance minister. Therefore, let us test that.

We know the finance minister neglected to put his assets in a blind trust, even though he was advised to. We know he told Canadians he was going to put them in a blind trust. We know the finance minister is sponsoring legislation that will directly benefit his family company Morneau Shepell. These are the same shares that he said he would put in a blind trust and did not. We know the finance minister misled or, at the very least, neglected to let the Ethics Commissioner know about the villa in France. We know the finance minister paid \$200 for this "omission". We know he continues to hold assets in at least six numbered companies, but the assets held within those numbered companies are not publicly known. These are undeniable facts.

Is the finance minister being open and transparent with his current personal holdings and numbered companies even after he was caught with holdings outside of blind trusts? The answer is no. Is the finance minister being sincere when he is sponsoring Bill C-27, when his friends, his family, and his indeed own finances stand to benefit greatly? The answer is no.

• (1600)

We know they will benefit because he said so as much when he was in an executive position at Morneau Shepell. The only thing the finance minister is being sincere about is himself, helping himself and his cronies. It is clear he failed to live up to the mandate letter he received from the Prime Minister on the first day being an officeholder of the Government of Canada. What other assets did he conveniently forget to tell the Ethics Commissioner about? It is because of this clear and established pattern of perhaps misinformation coming out of the finance minister that we have brought forward this opposition motion today.

Business of Supply

Everyone knows how much I love quoting the Prime Minister so I am going to continue to do it. This is again from the Prime Minister to the finance minister, “Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians.” How can the government expect its citizens to trust it when the Prime Minister has allowed this finance minister to flagrantly ignore the ethical standards the Prime Minister set himself?

This finance minister has demonstrated to Canadians that he does not trust them by refusing to provide us with the information about his numbered companies, by failing to disclose his villa to the Ethics Commissioner, and by introducing legislation that benefits himself, his friends, and his cronies. In addition, over the course of the last few months, the finance minister decided to tackle the issue of tax avoidance. It sounds great, it sounds full of integrity, but instead of targeting his friends in the trust fund world who are actually engaged in overseas tax avoidance schemes, the Liberal government has relentlessly gone after the average, run-of-the-mill, middle-class Canadian.

One of the groups the finance minister and Prime Minister have singled out are small business owners. Apparently they are tax cheats. Consultation never happened before they introduced what they were planning on turning into legislation. It does not sound like they trust small business owners. Family farmers, who work from dusk to dawn and feed our cities, are apparently tax cheats. Canadians suffering from diabetes have apparently been cheating the system so they need to change it and take away the disability tax credit or the RDSP. Families dealing with autism or mental health issues are thrown into the exact same basket. We never thought we would hear this but we have. Now even wounded veterans are seen in this same light.

“I believe in sunny ways. I believe in staying focused on Canadians, and that is exactly what we are doing. I believe that sunshine is the best disinfectant. Openness and transparency is what Canadians expect. That is what we will always stand for.” That was the Prime Minister's statement not even 30 days ago. Not even a month has gone by since he stated this in the House of Commons.

We have a bill and a Speech from the Throne that said we need to trust the government and the government needs to trust its people first. We have a mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the finance minister that talked about honesty, truth, sincerity, openness, about trusting the people of Canada. We have the Prime Minister's own words not even a month ago stating that it is, in fact, openness and transparency that Canadians expect, and apparently that is what they will always stand for. However, we question today whether they will stand and vote for openness and transparency when this motion is heard.

The media and members of this House have opened the shutters and have found out about the finance minister's villa in France. We have pulled back the curtains and found out that the finance minister's shares in Morneau Shepell were not held in a blind trust and that legislation he was sponsoring would greatly benefit his personal finances. We drew back the blinds, and again we found the finance minister holding assets in at least six unnamed numbered companies.

Now is the time for the finance minister to face the audience and come clean with Canadians about what assets he has in these numbered companies. Now is the time for the finance minister to let the sun shine in.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

In my view, we are spending an entire day discussing an important issue. We are talking about conflicts of interest and a concern for transparency. For more than two years, the government has been talking about a new era of transparency, but we are nevertheless spending a day talking about a potential conflict of interest and a minister who was unable or who supposedly forgot to declare certain assets.

I would like to ask my colleague whether the Minister of Finance improperly used the loophole in the Conflict of Interest Act for personal gain, and whether this loophole should be closed immediately. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, I obviously cannot comment on what the intentions were of the finance minister at the time, but what I can say is we can look at what the evidence is. The evidence is \$20 million held in a private corporation, not in a blind trust, that reaped somewhere around \$5 million in growth over the time period. The question that needs to be answered by the finance minister is why this happened.

The second question that needs to be answered by the finance minister is what is left in these other numbered companies? What other assets are there that perhaps have an interest in companies that the finance minister is personally regulating as a minister of the crown? Those are the questions that we need to hear answered through this motion. Hopefully we will get the support of the governing party, the support of all of the opposition parties to ensure that the finance minister is held accountable to Parliament and the people of the country—

The Speaker: There will be three minutes remaining in questions and comments for the hon. member in a few minutes, after I finish a statement to the House.

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

BILL C-352—CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

The Speaker: On Monday, November 20, 2017, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented its 46th report to the House. The recommendations set forth in the report designated Bill C-352, an act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to provide for the development of a national strategy (abandonment of vessels), standing in the name of the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith as non-votable.

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[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 92(4), the member appealed the committee's decision by filing with the Speaker an appeal motion signed by the member and five other members representing a majority of the recognized parties in the House. I wish to inform the House that the appeal by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith concerning the designation of 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, conforms with Standing Order 92(4). Accordingly, I order a vote by secret ballot on Tuesday, November 28, 2017, and Wednesday, November 29, 2017, on the following motion:

• (1610)

[English]

That Bill C-352, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to provide for the development of a national strategy (abandonment of vessels) be declared votable.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your announcement today for protecting my rights as a member to represent the interests of my community and constituents. I look forward to, and encourage all members to participate in, this act of democracy.

The Speaker: Although it is not really a point of order, I appreciate the member's thanks and look forward to this new procedure going forward.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FINANCE MINISTER'S ASSETS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I have noticed about today's debate and what is becoming quite obvious is that the opposition wants to talk about anything other than what matters to Canadians, which is the Minister of Finance's economic record and his performance over the past two years. The other thing I have noticed is that a number of opposition members are acting as judge and jury in this debate. This, in my view, highlights the importance of having certain institutions within Parliament.

The Conservatives had no problem weakening those institutions for 10 years, institutions as important as the Supreme Court. The previous prime minister initiated direct attacks on the Supreme Court and on many other officers of Parliament. Seeing the Conservatives act as judge and jury as they are today shows the importance of having strong, impartial, independent institutions like the Ethics Commissioner.

Does my colleague not think that the Ethics Commissioner is in the best position to advise parliamentarians on how they should proceed, and that when we follow her recommendations, we are in

effect complying with the rules governing our actions? Does he not think that she is in the best position to ensure that the rules governing the House are being respected?

[English]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, when we look at what has transpired over the last couple of years, it is difficult to take from the governing party that it wants us to focus on some sort of side issue. There is a real issue here. That issue is the trust between the Government of Canada, including the parliamentary secretary and the finance minister, and the people of Canada. When the conduct that we have seen by the finance minister over the last couple of years puts that into question, it is incumbent upon the opposition parties, not just my party but all of them, and members of the governing party to ask questions to try to understand. Until we have the information, we cannot do our jobs fully, so we need the finance minister to provide that information. We are calling on him to provide the information about the other numbered companies so we can see what is there and determine if he has, in fact, done other things for companies he owns and maybe regulates in his position as finance minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor in this debate. It seems some people are surprised to see me wearing a bow tie. I have received a few oblique and humorous comments about it on Twitter. I just want to say that it is in support of my colleague from Hull—Aylmer, who is my MP when I am here in Gatineau, and the Movember movement.

Today's motion is about ethics, and there is no more sensitive and serious topic in politics than ethics. Debates are never more fierce and passionate than when the subject of ethics comes up, because ethics are so very dear to our hearts, and should be closely monitored. Today we are talking about the Minister of Finance's ethics.

For almost a year, I had the pleasure and honour of being the official opposition's finance critic, so the finance minister was my counterpart at the time. I have expressed the respect and esteem I have for this man on several occasions, and I would like to do so again, even despite his serious ethical problems.

When a man of his calibre, a Bay Street baron, goes into politics and decides to help Canada in his own way, the political class as a whole is the better for it. However, as a high-profile minister, he must meet the highest ethical standards, and there is the rub. Unfortunately, the minister's ethics seem to have eroded over time.

What happened when this fantastically successful businessman, an inspiration to all Canadian entrepreneurs, entered the political arena? What did he say? On November 4, 2015, a few weeks after the election, on CBC's *Power and Politics*, a show then hosted by Rosemary Barton, who now co-anchors the evening news, the Minister of Finance said the following:

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•(1615)

[English]

He said, "I resigned my position as chair of the firm that I was chair of before and I expect that all my assets will go into a blind trust. I've already communicated with the ethics commissioner in that regard and I do need to work through that process and will do in the appropriate time frame." I repeat that he stated, "all my assets will go into a blind trust."

[Translation]

That day, the Minister of Finance said that all of his assets would go into a blind trust. Well, two years later, when we looked for this blind trust, we realized that we had been utterly misled. The Minister of Finance had been playing semantics. That is the sad part.

The hon. members across the aisle keep repeating that the minister followed the Ethics Commissioner's recommendations, but we know he was playing semantics. He said that he did not hold any shares in his company directly, but that he did own a numbered company that just happened to run his company. Playing semantics means playing fast and loose with one's ethics, and above all, one's honour. As Global News reported:

[English]

Records show that before the 2015 election Morneau held nearly 2.07 million common shares in Morneau Shepell through the Alberta numbered company, 1193536 Alberta Ltd. There is no public data about his current holdings in the company. At their current value of just over \$20 per share, those holdings would be worth more than \$40 million.

[Translation]

It seems, then, that the Minister of Finance was playing semantics. Rather than acknowledging that he had a company and that he had direct access to Morneau Shepell, he played semantics, saying that it was a numbered company. The Ethics Commissioner was misled just like the rest of Canadians. Every month, the Minister of Finance was receiving \$65,000 in dividends from this numbered company. That is considerable.

Then, we learned that he hid information from the Ethics Commissioner about the numbered company, which, among other things, owns a villa in Provence, France.

In my riding, I have had a condo for the past 15 years or so; I am very proud of it. I presume that some of my colleagues have a principal residence, a cottage and things like that.

However, forgetting that you have a house in Provence, France, probably does not happen very often. It is only when the minister was caught with his hand in the cookie jar that the Ethics Commissioner investigated and found him guilty. That is why he was ordered to pay a measly \$200 fine.

Once all of his numbered companies and the villa in Provence had been exposed, what did the minister do? Recognizing that he had been caught with his hand in the cookie jar, he decided to do what he should have done from the start: sell his shares. He also decided to donate all of his company's profits to charity. I cried a little when I heard that.

If that is not an admission of guilt, I do not know what is. If I suddenly decided to sell something that I insisted for two years I had

nothing to do with, it might be because I wanted to clear my conscience.

That is the saddest part of this whole mess. Unfortunately, this senior member can be forgetful and enjoys playing semantics. He is acting only now that he has been caught with his hand in the cookie jar; he should have taken the appropriate action two years ago. Canadians are not fooled by this sad state of affairs. Remember that the minister's assets increased by \$5 million in the past two years. He is Minister of Finance, and Morneau Shepell, a company founded by his father and built up by the minister himself, is in direct conflict of interest with the Minister of Finance.

Let me explain. Morneau Shepell is one of the biggest players in pension plans. The Minister of Finance establishes the government's financial and tax policy. This is a direct conflict of interest. I know what I am talking about. I used to work at TQS, whose pension plan just happens to be administered by Morneau Shepell. When I received the envelope seven or eight months ago, I was amused, and I even mentioned it to the minister. He had simply forgotten to tell me that, at the time, he was still in control of the company, which he also forgot to tell Canadians.

I am getting to the heart of the matter. The minister himself introduced Bill C-27. Morneau Shepell, his family company, specializes in pension plans. Bill C-27 is a bill that directly concerns pension plans. That, right there, constitutes a direct conflict of interest. Worse still, Morneau Shepell is the company that designed the pension plan for the Province of New Brunswick. Bill C-27, it just so happens, is largely based on what Morneau Shepell did with New Brunswick's pension plan. That is the definition of conflict of interest.

What did the minister say then? He said that he his actions were sanctioned by the Ethics Commissioner. That is not true. He went to see the Ethics Commissioner after introducing the bill. That is the most crooked part in all this. He played semantics with his numbered company, he forgot his house in Provence, and then he claimed to have worked with the Ethics Commissioner, even though he only met with the Ethics Commissioner after he introduced the bill. How can you trust someone who changes his story every time he gets caught with his hand in the cookie jar?

That is what is so sad and unfortunate in this case. That is why, as we speak, the Minister of Finance is being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner. The Prime Minister is, as well. For the first time in the history of Canada, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are both under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner.

It is sad to see that the Minister of Finance, who has a noble, rich and exciting past and who is such an inspiration for all business people or would-be politicians who are now in business, has burned away all of his prestige by making basic errors of ethical judgment. It is unfortunate.

That is why we have introduced this motion calling on the Minister of Finance to declare all of his assets once and for all, like all members of Parliament must do, and that he disclose what assets he holds in his numbered companies.

• (1620)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think what really needs to be said and repeated is the fact that we have the independent office of the Ethics Commissioner, and Mary Dawson has done a fantastic job in ensuring that issues of the nature that the Conservatives and NDP continuously want to raise are in fact raised in an apolitical fashion. The same rules in place today were in place when Stephen Harper was the prime minister of Canada. In fact, every one of us, all 330-plus members of Parliament, have an obligation to provide their assets to the commissioner, and the Minister of Finance, like everyone else, has done the same thing.

The Conservatives have focused on the Minister of Finance in this government. If they want to focus on the Minister of Finance, we are going to continue to focus on what is important to Canadians, which is our economy and the many other factors that improve Canada's middle class, those aspiring to be a part of it, and those who need the assistance of government.

Would the member not acknowledge that the purpose of the independent office is to ensure that the partisan shots that are being taken consistently by the opposition are in fact marginalized, because we have a Minister of Finance who has met the expectations of the commissioner, just like the other 300-plus members of this House of Commons?

• (1625)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, we pay all our respects to the Ethics Commissioner, but the Ethics Commissioner was misled three times by the finance minister. First, he said that "...all my assets will go into a blind trust". He said that, but he did not do that. Second, he forgot his villa in Provence, France—forgot to tell the commissioner. Third, he said he collaborated with the Ethics Commissioner on Bill C-27, which is false. He did so afterwards.

This is why the minister was wrong, three times in a row. One, two, three, and he is out.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent once again for his fabulous speech. He is a man of conviction, and I learn something from him every day. Although we do not always share the same values, I want to commend him on his work and compliment him on his beautiful bow tie. It suits him quite well.

To get back to the serious matter at hand, I listened carefully to his speech. It raised a number of concerns for me.

Does my colleague think that, with everything going on in relation to the alleged conflict of interest and the introduction of Bill C-27, which related directly to a financial benefit for the Minister of Finance, Canadians' trust in our Minister of Finance could be affected, especially since he holds the key to Canada's finances?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely. That is why this is so serious. In fact, the ethics and integrity of the most important person after the Prime Minister are in question, and the Prime

Business of Supply

Minister himself is also being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner.

This is even worse given that the rules came from the top. It was the Prime Minister who said that we needed to have the highest ethical standards. His mandate letter states, and I quote:

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default... It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect—they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere...

That is the exact opposite of what this government is doing right now.

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member for Winnipeg North ask the hon. member if the role of the Ethics Commissioner was not to keep issues from being partisan here in Parliament. I am sorry, but is it the hon. member's view that the role of the Ethics Commissioner is actually to protect the government from ethical controversy, and to protect its members from being accountable? Is that really the role of the Ethics Commissioner? That is what I heard the parliamentary secretary to the Liberal House leader say. I would be very shocked, but it does not surprise me that it is indeed the view and attitude of the Liberal members.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner is the ethics watchdog, but she needs accurate information in order to do her job.

However, on three occasions, the Minister of Finance failed to provide her with accurate information. First, he said he was going to put his assets in a blind trust. Then, he forgot all about his villa in Provence. Then, he said he collaborated on Bill C-27, but only after the fact.

One, two, three strikes and he is out.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my wonderful colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I am proud to rise today to speak to an issue that is very important for all Canadians.

This government brags non-stop about how open and transparent it is. In the mandate letter that the Minister of Finance received from the Prime Minister, it says:

It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect—they expect us to be honest...

That is exactly what the NDP wants. We want this government to be transparent and for the Minister of Finance to disclose all the assets that he bought, sold, or held in every one of his private companies or in his trusts since being appointed Minister of Finance.

Business of Supply

How many times over the past few months has the opposition asked the minister to be accountable? How long have we been trying to get clear and precise answers? If the minister had nothing to hide, he would have stood up only one time, answered the first question he was asked on the matter and we would have moved on. We would not be talking about it today in the House.

Unfortunately, that is not what happened, and this circus has been going on for weeks. I cannot believe that we are spending yet another entire day debating this issue. We could be spending our precious time here in the House debating important issues, such as poverty, to make life better for people in our communities.

We could talk about the workers who get up every morning to work long hours so they can join the middle class, as they are being led to believe. We could talk about employment insurance. Tomorrow, people will again be forced to take to the streets to protest the spring gap and the government's failure to do anything to help seasonal workers. We could even talk about softwood lumber or about amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect employees' pensions.

On its website, the Government of Canada pledged to strengthen open government by focusing on three key areas: open data, open information, and open dialogue. According to the website, the idea is to promote transparency.

To reflect these principles of open government, Employment and Social Development Canada even provides free access to information on the use of public funds so that all Canadians can hold Parliament, government, and public officials to account. It is written in black and white.

I believe that this rule also applies to all of us. The mandate letter also states the following:

As minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government. This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with opposition members of Parliament...

I somewhat doubt that the minister, by hiding the truth, has been true to his mandate letter.

The Minister of Finance has repeatedly broken the trust of Canadians. Initially, he let them believe that he had placed his Morneau Shepell shares in a blind trust. He did not. He then introduced a bill that would directly benefit Morneau Shepell and, consequently, the Minister of Finance himself. The minister used a loophole in the Conflict of Interest Act to put his shares in a private numbered company rather than divest himself of them or put them in a blind trust.

● (1630)

During the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics' 2014 legislative review of the act, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner recommended that this loophole be closed

The minister's efforts to promote Bill C-27 look a lot like conflict of interest and could very well be a serious violation of the rules governing conflicts of interest. It is undeniable that, if Bill C-27 were to pass, Morneau Shepell would benefit from significantly more

business and revenues and, as a major investor in the company, the minister would derive a personal financial benefit.

The more we learn about this business, the more we understand why the minister does not take more vigorous measures to tax the very wealthy, like closing the tax loophole related to stock options for CEOs. New Democrats believe that the government should work for all Canadians, not only a few friends of the government, and not only for those at the top of the food chain. The minister should apologize for betraying Canadians' trust.

The Minister of Finance introduced Bill C-27, which would increase the use of pension plans known as "target benefit plans". Morneau Shepell just happens to be a strong proponent of target benefit plans and an administrator of related services. The company could be one of the only four companies in the country to benefit from the new pension administration rules if Bill C-27 passes.

Bill C-27 would increase Morneau Shepell's business and revenues, since the company would be able to help its current clients transition to target benefit plans requiring yearly actuarial valuations, while current pension plans require actuarial valuations only every three years.

The Minister of Finance either directly holds, or held, over two million shares in Morneau Shepell, evaluated at \$43 million. Bill C-27 is a government bill introduced by the minister himself as Minister of Finance, and he forgot to declare a conflict of interest.

Five days after the minister's bill was introduced, the value of his Morneau Shepell shares rose by almost 5%, or \$2 million. That looks a lot like a conflict of interest, since the minister was in a position to improve his private interests in the execution of his public duties as Minister of Finance.

Recently, thinking he could put a lid on the issue, the Minister of Finance said he would donate any income from his Morneau Shepell shares since he took office to charity. What he did not tell us, however, is what would happen with the tax refund from his donation. We are not fools. We know very well that the donation will decrease the minister's own income tax. He could benefit from a tax credit of up to 29% of the amount of the donation. How very charitable of him.

In conclusion, we are not here to improve our own lives as members of Parliament or ministers. We are here to improve the lives of those we represent in our ridings across Canada. We must be transparent. If I get my credit line increased, I would have to contact the Ethics Commissioner. I would fill out the forms. It is our responsibility. All we are asking is that the minister take responsibility and declare his assets, nothing more.

Business of Supply

•(1635)

I sincerely believe that he should apologize. Any conflict of interest, whether it is the one we are talking about today or the others we have been talking about over the past few weeks, serve only to fuel cynicism regarding all politicians.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I will get a chance to speak today, so there is one particular point that I want to make and would be curious to hear the member's comments on.

There was a profile of the finance minister recently in the *Toronto Star*, which indicated that he likes to go by the nickname Batman. Also, we know that the Prime Minister dressed up as Superman. It is all fine to have nicknames and dress up in costumes, but at the same time the government is cutting danger pay for our elite soldiers. These are the real superheros, people who put their lives in harm's way standing up for Canada, and yet their danger pay is being cut. I would suggest that part of the problem with the current government is that its members are spending more time thinking about the people who dress up like superheros instead of the actual superheros who are fighting for Canada's interests.

Does the member have a comment on the fact that so much of the government's focus seems to be on enriching its front bench as opposed to actually standing up for the interests of Canadians?

•(1640)

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are here to serve Canadians. Our focus is on service. We did not get all dressed up to put on a dog and pony show. The government members always seem ready to take selfies and make the headlines, but we are here to serve our constituents.

I would like to remind all of the Canadians who are watching at home that Bill C-27 could benefit a company like Morneau Shepell or serve the interests of an MP or minister, and that is not right.

Earlier, I spoke about people who plan to hold a protest on EI because they are having difficulty making ends meet. The infamous spring gap has still not been resolved. These are the sorts of issues that we should be dealing with as MPs, fundamental issues, not superficial ones.

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct one point by the hon. Conservative member when he talked about party leaders dressing up. It was interesting to see the hon. Conservative leader dress up as a *Star Trek* commander. It is nice to see the Conservatives interested in science.

That said, the hon. member started her speech by saying that we are wasting our precious time. I am always interested when members get up and say we are wasting our time, but then go on to make a 10-minute speech about this particular issue.

She said that we should talk about issues like poverty. The finance minister is involved in part of the plan for the national

housing strategy we released. It is the first time the federal government has done this. It will result in hundreds of thousands of people finding homes and getting out of precarious housing situations. I wonder if the hon. member could comment on that and the finance minister's role in it.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, today has shown that the government is not taking this seriously. When it comes time to discuss important problems, the Liberal members talk about other completely unrelated subjects.

Today, we want to know why the Minister of Finance did not disclose his house in France. The rest of us disclosed our houses, our cars, and our secondary residences, if we have one. Those are well-established rules. It is easy. All MPs have to do is fill out a form.

When a person becomes a minister, he or she must follow and uphold even higher ethical standards. If the minister had told the truth, if he had answered a question properly in the first place, we would not be talking about this again here in the House.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Jonquière for her speech. Since being elected, she has distinguished herself with the quality of her remarks. Due to resignations in two other ridings, she is currently the only member speaking for the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. She does a great job representing Jonquière, but she is also very effective at representing central Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

The question I want to ask her is very simple. The Liberals refuse to reveal any information about the Minister of Finance, yet it was reported today that Canada's average household debt is now the highest in the world.

Why this contradiction? The Liberals are weak on both the economy and ethics.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In response, I would simply ask him if he believes that this government is fit to run our country. Numerous conflicts of interest have been revealed. The Liberals are omitting to disclose information. They boast about their programs, yet statistics show that problems related to poverty and EI remain unresolved. Employment insurance and poverty and important issues that we are still talking about today, and we need to take concrete action now to address them.

•(1645)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Status of Women; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable, Government Appointments.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is important to give a short and simple summary in order to explain the situation to members of the public who may listen to my speech.

We currently have a Minister of Finance who owned some companies before becoming an MP and minister in 2015. One of these companies, Morneau Shepell, provides advice on defined benefit pension plans, among other things. He worked in the pensions field, and, just like everyone else, he had to meet with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner after he was elected. When he was appointed finance minister, he told everyone, including members of his caucus and Canadians, that he had placed these interests in a blind trust. What this means is that someone else manages these interests, and the owner no longer has a say and no longer controls the assets, but hands over complete control to someone else. The owner cannot act to their own advantage.

That is what he told everyone. However, we eventually discovered that there was no blind trust and that he had retained control of his interests. Instead of doing what he had told everyone he would do, including his own colleagues who sit with him every day, he used a numbered company in Alberta to manage his company's shares. He probably chose Alberta because he pays less tax there. That alone is a little odd, given that the minister lives in Ontario, but oh well. He retained control of his interests and told everyone the opposite. We found out, and he tried to remedy the situation.

The other problem is that he tabled a bill, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, that would result in people switching to the pension plan sold by Morneau Shepell. This bill significantly increased the company's share price, and, to make a long story short, between the time he was elected as an MP and the time when the cat got out of the bag, the value of his shares went up by about \$10 million. Simply put, the Minister of Finance made \$10 million off the backs of all Canadians. My summary may be a little simplistic, but it is the truth. The Minister of Finance made \$10 million off the backs of Canadians.

What did the minister offer by way of amends? He promised to give the money he had made to charity, as if throwing money around would fix everything. For the Minister of Finance, it is as simple as that: he got caught, so he throws some money at the problem, and it magically all goes away. It reminds me of certain countries with dubious ethics, where all people have to do when they get in trouble is throw money around and all their problems vanish, so they never really have to worry.

What the Minister of Finance does not understand and what is really unfortunate in all this is that it is not about money. As Canadians, we are not angry at the Minister of Finance over \$10 million. No one thinks that if he had earned only \$2 million, that would have been fine, but \$10 million is really over the line. The amount is neither here nor there. He could have made \$100 and that would not have been too serious, but we are talking about \$10 million. The real problem is that he betrayed everyone's trust. He betrayed Canadians' trust as well as the trust of his colleagues in his own party, and he continues to behave as though nothing happened, as though throwing \$10 million at a charity will solve

everything, and now everything is fine and we should all just forget about it and move on. The fundamental problem is that no one can trust the Minister of Finance anymore.

That is precisely why we are debating this motion today. He did this, but we know that he has other numbered companies, whose contents are unknown. Has he used the same ploy to make money with other bills he has introduced? Did he use the budget to make money? We do not know, because he continues to hide what is in his numbered companies. We no longer trust him, yet he carries on as though nothing were wrong, as though the problem went away when he threw money at it. That is not how it works in real life. There is a trust issue here.

• (1650)

If a man cheats on his wife for two years and buys her a car to make amends, does that solve the problem? No, because the fundamental problem is that there has been a breach of trust. The money spent on making amends is not important. The Minister of Finance still does not get that. He still does not understand that it will take a lot more than a charitable donation to regain our trust.

What is most disheartening is that, once again, the Liberals have shown that they have a double standard. On the one hand, they are telling us that the minister can simply throw some money at a problem to make it all go away, and on the other, they are stopping people from receiving the disability tax credit. These are people who have decided to go to work and earn a living despite being disabled. However, they are told that because of one criterion or another, they are no longer considered to be disabled and are no longer entitled to the tax credit. Their efforts to find a job and contribute to the economy despite their condition are no longer recognized. That is how the rest of Canadians are treated.

Government members like to say they have increased family benefits. In reality, however, the poorest Canadians often do not even have access to these benefits. I see this every week in my riding. They are asked to provide a ton of paperwork to prove that they actually have custody of their children.

In my riding, a woman who lives with her husband went through months of back and forth with the Canada Revenue Agency, trying to prove that her three-year-old son actually lived with her. She was exasperated. The CRA kept asking her to fill out forms to prove that her three-year-old lived with her. Where did they think he lived? He is three. He does not have his own apartment. Of course he lives with his mother and father. No, that is not obvious to the Canada Revenue Agency.

In the meantime, the family benefits are taken away, not just in cases where information about the child is missing, but in all cases. This means that this mother has no money to buy books, clothing, and other things that her son will need for school. While the Minister of Finance can do as he pleases, this is how Canadians are treated.

Business of Supply

People who receive employment insurance benefits have a lot of requirements to meet. If they do one thing wrong, those benefits are taken away. Some people take a one-day training course, thinking it might help them get a new job. When they report that day of training, they get their EI benefits taken away, and for the next two months, they are told that their file is being reviewed. Meanwhile, they have no money to live on.

The Minister of Finance can earn \$10 million off the backs of Canadians, but if a family in need receives an extra \$50 by mistake, the government takes it away because they are not entitled to it. Come on.

The government then continues to say that everything is fine, when in reality, the most vulnerable Canadians are unable to meet all of the requirements set out by the Canada Revenue Agency and other government departments to prove that they are really in need. They are made to feel guilty for asking for the money they need, as though they were looking for a handout, when really this is money they are entitled to.

However, the Liberal minister can do whatever he wants. Let us remember that he forgot to disclose that he owned a house in France. I am sorry, but a person would have to be really out of it to forget something like that. I have seen some pretty drunk people in the emergency room, and they still remembered that they owned a house. However, that is beyond the Minister of Finance's ability. He is unable to disclose that he owns a house in France, an asset that he put in a company so that he could pay less tax. That is ridiculous. For him to say that he forgot he owned a house is an insult to Canadians' intelligence.

Government members are comparing this situation to the vote to abolish the Canadian Wheat Board, because they are saying that some members had small wheat farms but would be voting on it. That was certainly a concern, but it seems to me that there is a big difference between voting on a measure and a minister actually introducing government legislation, especially when the government has a majority, which means that the bill is more or less guaranteed to pass.

• (1655)

Making \$10 million on the backs of Canadians simply does not compare. I can say that that money would have been greatly appreciated.

We cannot ignore this. It is false to say that Canadians are not concerned about this. Canadians are very concerned about this.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech, and for her assistance in the procedure and House affairs committee recently. She spoke a lot about her riding and the issues facing her constituents and about working for those who are most vulnerable, which is what we are here for.

The finance minister has been part of a team to bring forward changes to improve the Canada pension plan, to increase the guaranteed income supplement, and has reduced child poverty in the country by 40%. Just yesterday, we had an amazing announcement on a national housing strategy, which would take hundreds of

thousands of Canadians out of precarious housing, ensuring that we address poverty in a meaningful way.

Could the hon. member speak to the government's plan and the finance minister's role in it?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, we are in exactly the same situation. The government is throwing money at programs without making sure that they are working properly. As for the Canada child benefit, the Liberals have put that money on the table, but the program is not really working.

Many people really need that money, but they cannot get it because the Canada Revenue Agency is asking them for one document after another, whether it is because they did not file their tax return, they do not have the resources, they are totally confused, they simply do not understand and there are no resources on the ground. If the poorest people cannot access the money they are entitled to, that means that the programs are not working.

If we do not bother to find out if the measures we are introducing are accessible to the people who need them, we are no further ahead. This is not just about throwing money at something and recording it in a budget line item. We have to be responsible and make sure that money actually gets to the people who need it. The government never does that, which is why we end up in these situations where there are simply no more resources.

For example, there is no Revenue Canada service counter in my riding. That means I am the only resource available to do CRA's work for Abitibi—Témiscamingue and help people get the money they need.

Sometimes I manage to get \$26,000 for families that are entitled to it. That is simply because I am capable of providing a service to them, which is something the government has given up on.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for her excellent speech.

I know she works very hard as a member of Parliament and also as a nurse. When the hospital emergency room really needs her talents, she is there. She meets all kinds of people in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, honest, hard-working people.

Right now, we have a Minister of Finance who makes decisions but refuses to tell us why and how he might benefit personally.

I have two simple questions for the member. What are the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue saying about his refusal to share that information? Do the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue agree with us that the minister should share all of that information?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, when I ask the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue what they think of the Minister of Finance, their answers are decidedly unparliamentary. They say they are being royally—I will let my colleague fill in the next word—by the Minister of Finance and by the Liberal government, and they are extremely disappointed.

Business of Supply

What saddens me even more is that the finance minister is giving all other politicians a black eye. I mean those from my own party, of course, but also the Conservatives and probably some Liberals. All of the politicians who are in the House for all the good reasons and who work day after day on behalf of their constituents have had their credibility called into question. People think we are no good, but there are some people in this House who really are here to represent their constituents.

The finance minister's actions are also fuelling public cynicism towards politicians. I think that is a real shame. The Minister of Finance should have to apologize for the grave disservice he is doing to those who stand up in this House every day and work hard for the people they represent.

• (1700)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

As the member of Parliament for the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, located in the heart of the Ottawa Valley, I am pleased to be allowed this honour to thank the constituents for the trust they have placed in me to represent their interests in the Parliament of Canada.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate my eastern Ontario colleague, the MP from Carleton, for his exemplary service to Canadians as the shadow finance minister and author of the motion we are debating today.

The motion presented by the Conservative Party, Canada's government in waiting, calls on the finance minister to reveal all of the assets he has bought, sold, or held within his private companies or trust funds since he became the finance minister to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

I have heard from many Canadians that they do not trust the finance minister, the member for Toronto Centre. They see him as a one percenter who made his money helping other Toronto wealthy one percenters avoid paying their fair share of taxes through the use of complicated tax avoidance schemes like offshore bank accounts. They do not believe the silly, repetitious talking points prepared for them by Gerald Butts in the Prime Minister's Office, and they do not believe the controversial Ben Chin, the recently hired excuse writer for the hon. member from Toronto.

Ben Chin is a refugee from Kathleen Wynne's Toronto Liberal Party. His specialty is finding ways to increase people's power bills. Explaining tax increases to pay for bad deficit spending is his current job description. He is doing a lousy job, and Canadians are not buying what his party is selling. What Canadians see is a very greedy, rich Liberal Party insider.

Let us be clear. The Toronto Centre MP has seen his personal financial holdings substantially increase since he was appointed finance minister by his fellow one percenter and trust fund beneficiary, the Prime Minister.

Morneau Shepell, the family company that we think the finance minister holds a million or two shares in, but do not know the exact number because he refuses to come clean with Canadians, reported a 2017 third-quarter profit of \$9.7 million. That is up a whopping 85.3% from the same period in 2016. The Toronto Centre MP knows about the big jump in profits because he neglected to put his vast personal holdings in a blind trust, which is what he was required to do, and he misled Canadians into believing he had done so. We know he broke the law because he was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner of Parliament and fined for not setting up a blind trust.

The Parliamentary ethics officer is investigating the contravention of Canada's ethics laws by the Toronto Centre MP from his introduction of legislation that could personally benefit his vast private fortune. That legislation, Bill C-27, has been identified by outsiders as a massive conflict of interest.

Canadians will not be able to judge the conflict of interest until the finance minister reveals all of the assets he has bought, sold, or held within all his private companies or trust funds since he became the finance minister. Only then will Canadians be able to determine if his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties and whether Bill C-27 is worth supporting.

One thing Canadians know for certain is that \$9.7 million would pay for a lot of snowsuits and warm boots. This is particularly true in my riding in eastern Ontario, where many parents are forced to choose to heat or eat, thanks to the corrupt environmental policy of the Toronto Liberal Party. Taxpayers ask how corrupt the policy is. With figures from Stats Canada, there are between 550,000 and 700,000 households at risk of having to choose either to heat or eat in Ontario.

Another example of bad deficit spending this year is that the Toronto Liberal Party will add \$660 million to the provincial deficit to pay for the bad hydro policy it has blamed on man-made global warming, not including the \$40 billion in deferred taxes that will have to be collected after the next election to pay for the unfair hydro plan.

• (1705)

The finance minister and his Toronto Bay Street buddies do not care about seniors who are impoverished by their energy bills. They avoid paying their fair share of taxes using complicated tax schemes and offshore tax shelters. Canadians know this is the case, as the amount of taxes collected from the wealthiest Canadians has been dropping since the finance minister was appointed.

Business of Supply

This is not the first time that smart voters in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have made the connection between Liberal Party insiders and the attack on seniors, veterans, and pensioners by the finance minister. In the 2011 election, the finance minister's party parachuted a Toronto Bay Street lawyer into my riding, Christine Tabbert, a partner at the Toronto Bay Street law firm Fasken Martineau DuMoulin, which included then Liberal Party president Alfred Apps. In a clear demonstration of how smart Ottawa Valley voters are, parachuted Liberal candidate Christine Tabbert came fourth in that election, behind even the NDP, the worst ever Liberal Party showing in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Ms. Tabbert would go on to seek the Liberal nomination for the Toronto riding of Trinity—Spadina, only to be convinced to withdraw from a nomination race marked by controversy and legal challenges. She was rewarded for dropping out of the nomination with a political appointment after the last election, only to find herself losing that position after the minister she was chief of staff for was demoted for failing to help veterans.

Ms. Tabbert came to the attention of the Liberal Party and Mr. Apps by being counsel for Kerry (Canada) Inc., representing the company against a group of company pensioners. The employees lost their case to be protected from the company's withdrawing of funds from their pension plan.

The lawyer who represented the former Kerry employees said the big losers in this case were members of defined pension plans. The lawyer said that the decision would lead to the erosion of defined benefit plans. In particular, he stated, "I don't believe this is in the best interest of workers in this province or in this country." The lawyer for one of the intervenors in the case, the Association of Canadian Pension Management stated, "A number of companies were already doing this.... They would have been exposed if the decision went the other way."

Morneau Shepell, the company the finance minister held shares in, is currently an executive member of the Association of Canadian Pension Management, so Canadians know that the finance Minister was closely informed of this court case.

Could it be that before he was finance minister, he was advising companies to raid workers' pension plans?

Could it be that when he was appointed finance minister by our entitled Prime Minister, he knew there was a problem that required a fix? Could it be that the fix was Bill C-27?

Canadians need answers.

On September 18, *The Globe and Mail* revealed that retired postal workers had warned the Ethics Commissioner in a letter that the finance minister could be in a conflict of interest over the pension legislation, Bill C-27, and its potential benefits for Morneau Shepell. The same letter was delivered to the Toronto Centre MP's office on Sept. 18.

It is now over two months later, and still the finance minister refuses to practice openness and transparency with all Canadians.

The Conservative Party believes that all parliamentarians, regardless of their professional background, need to follow the rules

and disclose their private interests publicly. Canadians expect openness and transparency from their government.

Canadians have a right to know if the member for Toronto Centre is profiting from his position as finance minister and whether or not his financial interests have conflicted with his public duties.

Currently, three members of the Liberal cabinet are being investigated by the Ethics Commissioner, including the Prime Minister and the finance minister. The finance minister was caught exploiting loopholes to shelter his wealth, and secretly profited in the millions of dollars from a publicly traded company while implementing policies and regulations that directly impact that company. Now he is under investigation for introducing pension legislation that could profit that company, Morneau Shepell.

It is time for the Prime Minister to come clean with Canadians and order his finance minister to reveal all of his assets. Let Canadians be the judge of whether his government is suffering from conflicts of interest.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): My goodness, Madam Speaker, if there is any justification for having a commissioner who is truly independent, the member across the way has just made the best case possible. It is incredible just how much misinformation she put on the record. I would challenge the member to say what she said inside the chamber, outside the chamber. It is incredible. It emphasizes why it is so important that all members of the House have a responsibility—

An hon. member: Shame.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is no shame. The shame is on the other side. The shame is from the words that were being spewed by the member across the way.

All members have a responsibility to go to the commissioner. The commissioner has the responsibility to do a review and make inquiries where there is a need to do so, which happens on both sides of the House.

Does the member recognize that the commissioner is the one who is in the best position to hold members accountable with respect to the code of ethics? The commissioner is apolitical. I would ultimately argue that she is an—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to allow the member to respond, and we have to be able to get some more questions in.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that my biggest fan across the way was paying attention today.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, his comments were an affront to the House of Commons. What we would appreciate, as would all parliamentarians, is for the finance minister to table his holdings, not only for the Ethics Commissioner but, in view of transparency and letting that sun shine through, so all Canadians could know whether he was in a conflict of interest.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, here is something I will say inside the House, and I will repeat it outside the House. This was in the mandate letter to the finance minister and to all ministers in the cabinet:

...you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.

This is what Liberals committed to. This is what the Prime Minister committed to, and all of his cabinet ministers made the same promise to Canadians.

We have the case of the finance minister, who for two years allowed it to be believed that his personal assets were in a blind trust. We then found out, because reporters dug into the files and found out, that was not the case. He then revealed that it was true: he had shares in Morneau Shepell and he introduced a bill that would help Morneau Shepell out. However, he was going to donate the profits to charity, some millions of dollars.

Now there is another question. He has five other companies that are in numbered accounts, in which nobody has any clue what is held, including my friend from Winnipeg North. If the Liberals are going hold to their promise of public scrutiny, then they should simply do it. That is what makes the story go away.

I am not sure the Liberals even see this as a problem. That should be a concern to all Canadians.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I did not hear a question from the member, but his comments were well taken by all parliamentarians.

The Prime Minister required, in mandate letters, that the ministers go over and above what was required of them in the code of ethics. It did state public disclosure. Public disclosure means disclosure to all Canadians. We ask that the minister uphold and bring to light his entire holdings.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will have to interrupt the member shortly. I just wanted to let him know.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

• (1715)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to briefly address this debate.

Earlier I thought the NDP asked a great question about salmon stocks during question period. However, I would suggest to the NDP members that if they want the government to care about salmon stocks, all they have to do is get the finance minister to buy some.

With one minute left, I just want to say that members of the government claim that the finance minister did not break any rules. In fact, he paid a \$200 fine for breaking rules. He had a villa in

France that he did not tell the Ethics Commissioner about. On the face of it, their talking points with respect to that are not factual.

In light of the vast amounts of money the finance minister has made as a result of the appreciation of his shares since he became the finance minister, I doubt the \$200 fine will sting very much.

The reality is that it was clear that he broke the rules. More than that, Canadians can very clearly see a conflict of interest.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred until Monday, November 27, 2017, at the end of the time provided for government orders.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, November 27, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

NATIONAL IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.) moved:

Private Members' Business

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the importance of educating Canadians about the consequences of impaired driving due to alcohol, drugs, fatigue or distraction, which, each year, destroys the lives and health of thousands of Canadians, by designating the third week of March, each year, National Impaired Driving Prevention Week.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is with tremendous enthusiasm that I rise to introduce my private member's bill, Motion No. 148. Such bills represent an important part of the work conducted by this House. PMBs, as we refer to them around here, provide members such as myself with an opportunity to put forward and pursue a matter that is believed to be of fundamental interest to our fellow citizens, to trigger a fundamental change in their lives, and to provide a tangible solution to a problem currently impacting their lives.

It is with great pride that I apply myself in my duties as member of Parliament for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. I represent good people, who on a daily basis further themselves to improve their lives and those they hold dear, thus ensuring that we all have a better country that we can all be proud of. I feel very humble when I witness the trust they place in me.

While I resisted the pressures and invitations to become a candidate for public office because of my concerns about my family and profession, all of my constituents know that, when I accepted, I did so with all my determination, energy, and enthusiasm. It was equally clear that I would continue to pursue activities that both defined me and enriched my experience as a parliamentarian. Thus, I continued my practice of law, my teaching, research, and book-writing activities, my involvement with charities, and most important of all, my work as an advocate for road safety, work that brings me back to an important motivation and guiding principle in my decision to enter public service.

Chief among the reasons for carrying on my professional, philanthropic, and community activities after my election is my deep-felt need to remain grounded and retain sufficient independence to carry on my work as an elected official. I am fully mindful that, because of my decision to remain an active law practitioner, and by virtue of the prevailing rules in place, I am precluded from ever occupying a cabinet position. As I will explain shortly, my personal journey and the objectives that I set to attain while having the privilege of being an integral part of this institution more than makes up for any opportunity that I might be forgoing.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

I notice that our fellow citizens are adopting healthy lifestyles these days. Ironically, by leading an active life, they are putting their lives at risk, because accidents are the leading cause of death for Canadians under 45. That statistic includes all accidents, not just road accidents, though road accidents account for a substantial portion.

Canada suffered a great tragedy in the 2000s when 158 Canadian men and women in uniform gave their lives for their country in a decade-long war. However, over that same period, nearly 100 times more people died in collisions involving drugs and alcohol. It is an unspeakable tragedy. We are talking about nearly 15,000 people who died in that way.

Wars end, but road fatalities never do. Every day, four Canadians die in a collision involving alcohol or drugs. Sadly, the tragedy does not end there, as others suffer serious injuries, leading to paralysis, amputation, and other functional limitations. Add to that all the other injuries and their consequences, as well as the material damages, hospital bills, health care costs, and subsequent losses to society.

In terms of the criminal aspect, police reported more than 72,000 impaired driving incidents in 2015. Impaired driving is the most common offence in cases heard by criminal courts. It is the leading criminal cause of death in Canada.

This brings us to cannabis. As we speak, Canadians are driving under the influence of cannabis. This drug is currently sold by criminal gangs, which are motivated solely by profit and are not bound by any obligation to ensure the well-being or safety of their clients. It goes without saying that when cannabis is legalized, people will continue to consume it, and we will still have a problem with people driving under the influence of cannabis. We are entering a new era that will require a new approach and stepped-up prevention efforts.

The legalization of cannabis raises many concerns about its impact on driving. However, legalization also brings new hope, as it may result in more research on cannabis, its effects, and above all, techniques for determining its precise impact on driving ability.

As for collisions and non-accidents, in common language, we tend to consider or at least to talk about a fatality caused by a drunk driver as an accident, when really, there is nothing accidental about it. It is a collision, not an accident.

In terms of technology, we cannot talk about the tragedy of impaired driving without mentioning the meaningful progress that has been made in recent years. Although considerable progress has been made, we still cannot forget the staggering number of deaths that do still occur as well as the serious injuries. I want to reiterate that this progress would not have been possible without all the efforts made in the area of prevention by many stakeholders in the field. I cannot say it enough: prevention must continue. We must constantly continue, renew, and increase prevention efforts.

There is more. Technology must also serve to help and strengthen prevention. Over the next few years, we can look forward to advances in artificial intelligence and deep learning in order to come up with more solutions to eliminate the scourge of drug-impaired driving and eliminate the sources of distracted driving.

Private Members' Business

• (1725)

[English]

What is my motivation? To adequately describe my motivation, I need to provide a glimpse into my personal journey. After 5,000 years of lineage in a magnificent locality in what is now Italy, I was the first generation to be born abroad, namely, in my great country of Canada, while being a dual citizen. Where I was born was, at the time, the poorest area of the poorest neighbourhood in Canada. While being poor, we never felt poor because we had one another.

My father is a survivor of the Nazi camps, where he faced forced labour, the harshness of physical and psychological punishment, and hunger on a daily basis. Both he and my mother devoted themselves to their family while instilling the values and virtues of hard work and service to the community. That is what brought me to be a founder of the largest ethnic cultural centre in Canada, the Leonardo da Vinci Centre, on the board of which I remain to this day and where I have established my riding office.

Then there was a call. In my case, it all began with a phone call in the middle of the night on July 24, 2010. The phone stopped ringing before I could answer it. I went back to bed, and shortly after, it rang again. When I answered, the caller identified himself as a physician in the emergency ward of the Montreal General Hospital. One of my three daughters had been brought there after being in a car that struck a tree at a very high speed, actually 140 kilometres an hour. She was in critical condition, had brain bleeds, multiple fractures, and was in a coma. I did not recognize her when I saw her. The physician insisted that I get to the hospital as quickly as possible. He kept repeating and asking if I understood what that meant.

It was the summer of Claudia's 16th birthday. After a midsummer school reunion, she was waiting for a taxi with two friends when a young man offered to drive the girls home. Despite their initial refusal, they accepted. Claudia and her friend, Justine, arrived at the hospital between life and death.

Claudia was in a month-long coma before waking up completely paralyzed. I was told she would never walk again. I never accepted the initial reports that she would not make it. Claudia, on the other hand, never accepted the notion that she would not walk again. Today I simply need to turn my head, and I see a living miracle every time I look at her. Now she attends McGill law school. She is the youngest member of the board of directors of a public corporation in Canada's history. She was awarded the distinction of the Young Quebecers Leading the Way Award for 2017. She has run two half marathons. All of that is because of her tireless advocacy in matters of road safety, and particularly, impaired-driving prevention. She is a survivor and a miracle. However, Justine, who was with her in the car, is still in the hospital, having gone through another surgery this week.

Claudia asked that I salute the member for Souris—Moose Mountain for his inspiring words of wisdom he shared with me and with her this morning, and also that I salute the member for Rivière-du-Nord, whose son was lost in a similar tragedy.

I dissected the events. I had ample time to reflect. That is when I created Cool Taxi with the fathers of two other girls, which offers the option of a safe ride home and gives an opportunity that did not exist

before. What we also see is the number of deaths in Quebec, as elsewhere in Canada. In Quebec we used to lose 100 kids a year between the ages of 16 and 25. Now we lose 50. That means that every year, there are 50 kids who are alive, and this is year after year.

I want to salute all those who participated in the round table this morning and give a particular salute to Theresa-Anne Kramer, MADD, la Fondation Jean Lapointe, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, Arrive Alive, and Alco Prevention Canada.

• (1730)

[Translation]

What I really want to emphasize is that people can change their behaviour, and prevention and intervention efforts on the part of all of the volunteers and groups working in this area can help.

I hope that all of these efforts combined will put an end to this scourge. I am asking my colleagues to say yes to making a difference, to road safety, to prevention, to saving lives, and to a national impaired driving prevention week.

[English]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I commend the hon. member for his passion and commitment to this motion.

I had the opportunity to meet with the member's daughter earlier today. I am honoured to say that I am a survivor like her. Families are affected by this tremendously. My parents were halfway around the world when it happened to me. Neither one of them knew what was going on. In those days, we did not have cellphones to get that information. I truly understand and feel for what he and his family have had to go through.

Part of this conversation has one discussion that has never happened. While we have heard from MADD and its representatives have spoken about various aspects of impaired driving, we have not heard from the victims. We do not ask the victims, those of us who were lucky enough to survive such a tragic event.

Could the member provide us with his thoughts on that?

• (1735)

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Madam Speaker, I salute my dear colleague. He has been extremely generous with the words he has shared with my daughter and also with his insight and advice. I commend him for having made it all the way to this honourable institution.

My daughter was victimized by the accident, and she was also victimized by the judicial process. It was extremely painful going through that. I am a lawyer by profession, and I owned the courthouse. It was where I spent most of the time. Despite that, this was one of the most painful exercises. I always think about the other victims who do not have the expertise I have to navigate through it. I realized that what was lacking in our system was that the victims were not represented in the judicial process.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I was in my early teens, one of my favourite buddies was a cousin. We woke up one morning to the news that he had been killed by a drunk driver up in Prince George. In those days, the penalties were not what we would see today. I think the driver was fined something like \$65.

I have learned over time, and particularly in the work I did with the public auto insurer in British Columbia where my job was to try to educate the public about the dangers of drinking and driving, and other bad driving behaviours, that when somebody starts to drink, the first thing that goes is the person's judgment. All of a sudden, he or she is not in a situation to make wise, sane choices.

Could my hon. colleague talk about the message we need to send to people in a drinking and driving prevention week, which talks about making wise decisions before their judgment is impaired?

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Madam Speaker, I will provide an example of where we are all at risk of getting involved with such behaviour.

A friend, a person who is highly commended in his community, was arrested for impaired driving. When I spoke with him I said, "You of all people". He had such a positive attitude, and was an example for everybody. I asked him how he could have been involved in that. He said that he was at an event, people started having a few drinks, and he was getting phone calls all evening about an emergency at the office. He kept trying to manage it over the phone, but at some point he told those in his office to calm down, that he would go to the office. He got in his car, and the first thing he knew, he was stopped by the police. When the police officer asked him if he had been drinking, for a split second, he forgot he had been drinking.

Prevention is so important because it is a constant reminder. Prevention is what works.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, every day across Canada we know individuals who get behind the wheel of a car and make that dreadful decision of driving while impaired. I would be willing to suggest that there is not a single member in this House who has not been either directly or indirectly impacted by an incident of impaired driving.

I know the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has been an advocate for ways to reduce impaired driving since his own daughter was severely injured in an accident involving an impaired driver. I am so glad to see her here with us in the chamber today in the gallery. I applaud the member for all that he has done to raise awareness, and for introducing a private member's motion that would proclaim the third week of March, each and every year, to be designated national impaired driving prevention week.

Far too often we hear in the news about another incident or fatality because a driver made the dreadful decision of thinking that he or she was still capable of operating a vehicle or would not get caught. In preparing for this motion, it was heart-wrenching to read about what the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel went through as his daughter was recovering, as well as listening to his presentation here in the chamber this evening. If passing this motion saves one life, then it is worth setting in stone a full week solely for the purpose of highlighting impaired driving.

I understand that through the good work of schools, police departments, governments, and organizations, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, individuals are being bombarded with respect to the consequences of getting behind the wheel after one too many beers or being high on prescription drugs or illegal substances. Police departments, such as the one in the city of Brandon, are constantly setting up check stops to look for those who think they can evade the law and put others at risk.

Many may be surprised to know this, but impaired driving in rural areas is far more overrepresented than those living in large urban centres. The reason is that in places like Ottawa and Toronto, or even in smaller communities like Red Deer or North Bay, there are available means of public transportation. This statistic of having more incidences of impaired driving in rural Canada should lead to a larger discussion on how we can make sure that impaired drivers stay off the roads and highways. Technology and innovations, such as Uber or Lyft, could in fact bridge that gap of having available ways to get home. Another program that has worked quite successfully is Operation Red Nose. For years, the volunteers of this very worthwhile program have driven thousands of people home from Christmas or New Year's parties, while also raising funds for many worthwhile causes.

The worst thing about discussing the topic of driving while impaired is that there are still some people out there in society who are more than willing to continue to do it, yet they do not think about the others who may get hurt because of their terrible life decision. Driving while impaired is one of the most selfish decisions that anyone can make.

There are some serious concerns out there that Canadians are not getting the message. According to a recent study, despite years of public messaging about the dangers of drinking and driving, Canada rates the worst among 19 wealthy countries for the percentage of roadway deaths linked to alcohol impairment. Last year, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did a study of various countries and found that while fewer people were dying from car crashes, the proportion of deaths linked to alcohol impairment was 34%, which is higher than any other country that it surveyed.

I am also pleased that the member has put forward in his motion that drugs, fatigue, and distraction would also be part of a prevention week.

Psychoactive prescription drugs can also contribute to impaired driving. Not every prescription drug out there will have the same effect on one's body and mind. In many circumstances it will impact drivers in varying degrees based on the length of time they have taken the prescription drug or the dosage. While alcohol and illegal substances are now at the forefront of any discussion involving impaired driving, we can never forget that more Canadians take prescription drugs than ever before in our history.

Private Members' Business

● (1740)

While there are particular stories involving prescription drugs that have made the news, such as the recent incident involving a famous golfer, it is imperative for all of us to shine a light on the inadequate amount of information available to everyday Canadians about the consequences of prescription drugs and their impact on one's motor skills. We also know there are countless instances of people being under the influence of drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, and crystal meth, which impact their body and brain just as badly, if not worse, than alcohol. According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, the percentage of Canadian drivers fatally injured in vehicle crashes and testing positive for drugs now exceeds that of drivers testing positive for alcohol.

As parliamentarians, we must be fully seized with the unintended consequences of legalizing recreational marijuana. I have spoken at great length about my trepidations of rushing the July 1, 2018 deadline. While I am fully supportive of this private member's motion, I wonder if we should at this moment in time heed the advice of police chiefs, mayors, and provincial governments, who all say they will not be prepared by this date. Across Canada, police departments are scrambling to train and certify their officers as drug recognition experts so they can identify and charge those who are impaired.

If we at this time can reflect on the real life consequences of what will happen once marijuana is legalized for recreational purposes, all partisanship aside, it would be inappropriate to rush ahead until at least the training and equipment are acquired by our law enforcement agencies.

It is truly astounding that regardless of how many times people are reminded and taught about the dangers of driving while impaired, the numbers are not coming down as quickly as we would like. According to MADD Canada, over a thousand Canadians are dying in impairment-related crashes. While there have been great strides in bringing this number down, there is still much more to do.

We must never forget that only 50 years ago, impaired driving was in many instances a tolerated behaviour. Many of us have heard stories of someone being caught behind the wheel being impaired, yet sometimes being allowed by the police officer to drive home while the officer followed them to make sure they made it. Now in Canada, our drunk driving laws are some of the most heavily litigated in our judicial system, and massive amounts of resources are being applied to keep our roadways safe.

I know that bars, pubs, and restaurants are all doing their part in serving responsibly. I know that organizations are working diligently around the clock to lobby for stricter laws and new laws to deter reckless behaviour. The most powerful antidote to fix this problem is for friends and loved ones to step up to the plate and ensure that nobody operates a motor vehicle while impaired. Education and awareness must continue. I know there are many members in this House who have worked diligently on Bill C-46. I also know that police and RCMP officers are doing everything in their power to enforce the law and keep dangerous drivers from hurting others.

No person or family deserves to go through what the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has gone through. I too know first-

hand what it means to be directly impacted by an impaired driver. One incident is too many. We should never tolerate, under any circumstance, driving while impaired as socially acceptable. With that I will finish my remarks, and once again thank my hon. colleague for all his work throughout the years and for bringing this debate to the floor of the House of Commons.

● (1745)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my support and congratulations to the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for bringing this important initiative before the House of Commons. We will be supporting it enthusiastically.

I understand as well that the motion touches on issues that are quite personal for the member and his family, and I join with the member for Brandon—Souris in expressing my sympathy and solidarity with my colleague.

It is certainly my aim to support all measures that reduce the number of impaired driving accidents in Canada and by doing so, spare families the considerable pain and needless difficulties my hon. colleague and his family endured. Frankly, I would be quite surprised if any of my colleagues in the House would not support the motion. I would hope that despite our political differences, we are all united in our desire for the safety of Canadians.

With respect to criminal justice matters, the NDP supports preventative measures. If we can eliminate behaviours, such as impaired driving that precipitates such terrible outcomes, we can save lives and alleviate the heavy burden on our justice system as well.

Furthermore, I would suggest that awareness campaigns target young people before they are old enough to drive. We must instill in young Canadians the knowledge that impaired driving is extremely dangerous and can have dire consequences. We must teach our youth that it is selfish, reckless, anti-social, and immoral to take these risks with the lives of other Canadians. The sooner Canadians of all ages fully understand the devastating impacts of all forms of impaired driving the faster we can reduce the number of these senseless deaths and injuries.

We have seen that awareness campaigns work. Rates of drinking and driving have gone down significantly since such campaigns were launched. According to Stats Canada data, in 2015, the rate of impaired driving was 201 incidents per 100,000 population. That was the lowest rate since data on impaired driving was first collected in 1986, 4% lower than in 2014. Clearly, we are moving in the right direction.

However, in spite of a decline in impaired driving rates over the past 30 years, impaired driving remains one of the most frequent criminal offences and is among the leading criminal causes of death in Canada.

Private Members' Business

We have made significant strides forward, but alcohol-impaired driving remains a serious issue in our country. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that Canada had the highest percentage of alcohol-related crash deaths among the 20 high-income countries of the OECD in 2013. This reckless behaviour is unacceptable, given our knowledge about its detrimental effects. One death or serious injury caused by alcohol-impaired driving is one too many.

I had the opportunity, as a member of justice committee, to hear testimony from experts, like Dr. Robert Solomon, during its consideration of Bill C-46. The bill would allow police to administer what are called “mandatory alcohol screening” measures as a way to apprehend all drivers at the stop who are impaired. The bill would allow officers to test every driver at a stop, instead of relying on their subjective discretion, as is currently the case. More people are going to get caught and more people are going to be frightened about being caught. We hope as a result the level of deaths and injuries will go down.

The evidence is unassailable if we look at the European countries. As Dr. Solomon pointed out, this kind of testing will lead to less carnage and mayhem on our roads and highways. He said that when Switzerland enacted mandatory alcohol screening in 2005, the percentage of drivers testing positive for alcohol fell from about 25% to 7.6%. Alcohol-related crash deaths dropped by approximately 25%.

Therefore, along with adopting these sorts of effective practices, we must certainly continue our education campaigns and commitment to support police officers in their work to eliminate alcohol-impaired driving from coast to coast to coast.

• (1750)

I also now want to talk about the misinformation that exists around drug-impaired driving, particularly among Canadian youth. This is very troubling. We all talk about the dangers of impaired driving as if everyone knows it and it is well acknowledged, but there is a lack of awareness about drug-impaired driving among young Canadians, who are still the leading demographic for impaired driving.

It is imperative we take the necessary precautions to ensure Canadians have accurate information. In order to ensure safety, we have to address the misconceptions among young people and some parents that driving stoned, driving under the influence of cannabis, is somehow safer than driving under the influence of alcohol. An alarming percentage of youth actually do not think drugs impair their ability to drive, which of course is categorically false.

A document published by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction addresses this persistent misconception head on. Here is what it says:

The challenge is many youth do not consider driving under the influence of marijuana to be risky, unlike driving under the influence of alcohol. Some youth even believe that using marijuana makes them better drivers, but evidence clearly shows that it impairs driving ability.... [M]ore awareness campaigns that centre on youth are needed to deter them from driving while impaired, especially after using marijuana.

The idea that somehow driving stoned is going to make someone a better driver is out there and it is a very dangerous idea, so one hopes

the government will take the necessary educational measures to increase awareness of this problem.

Nearly one-third of teens do not consider driving under the influence of cannabis to be as bad as driving under the influence of alcohol. That comes from a national study by Partnership for a Drug-Free Canada.

Nearly 25% of parents of teenagers did not consider driving while high on cannabis to be as bad as drinking and driving.

I hope that, by dedicating the third week of March as national impaired driving prevention week, we can reach primarily young people. The timing coincides nicely with spring break in most provinces, and a little reminder about impaired driving at that time is obviously a good thing.

In addition to discussions around alcohol and drug impairment, I understand that Bill C-373 has been brought forward to address distracted driving. According to researchers Robertson, Bowman, and Charles: “In some provinces, distracted driving has reportedly been the cause of even more car accidents than impaired driving.”

With the exception of Nunavut, all provinces and territories currently have their own laws on distracted driving. Ultimately, it is up to the provincial jurisdiction to determine how we are going to implement these laws.

I wish to reiterate, in conclusion, that the NDP is entirely supportive of measures that prevent tragedies that result from impaired driving. If we can educate Canadians about the extreme dangers of all forms of impaired driving, we can reduce the number of people who are doing this and avoid future tragedies for Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. With the holiday season almost upon us, our discussion today is very timely. The holidays are a time of year when people get together to celebrate with family and friends, but there is, of course, a cloud to that silver lining: an increased likelihood of impaired driving incidents following the celebrations.

Private Members' Business

A number of public education awareness campaigns are in full swing this time of year. They encourage Canadians to drive sober or offer drivers alternative ways to get home safely. One of them, as we have heard already, MADD Canada's project red ribbon, is marking its 30th anniversary this year. Together, these efforts have had a powerful and positive impact. According to MADD Canada's estimates, between 1982 and 2010 nearly 36,650 lives were saved in Canada due to reductions in alcohol-related fatal crashes. That is something for which we can all be very thankful.

However, despite the progress we have made as a society, impaired driving remains a very serious problem in our country. People who are in no shape to drive continue to get behind the wheel. Some choose to drive after getting high or having too much to drink, but as this motion suggests, impaired driving is not limited to drugs or alcohol. Motorists who are too tired to drive are also impaired and can cause just as much damage as drivers who are drunk or high. The same can be said for distracted drivers, including those who text behind the wheel.

Impaired drivers of all kinds not only put their own lives at risk but endanger the lives of their passengers and everyone else around them. In fact, impaired driving remains the leading criminal cause of death in Canada—anti-social criminal decisions leaving thousands of Canadians dead or seriously injured each year. What makes this carnage on our roads all the more senseless is how easily these deaths could have been prevented. The risks are well known. The risks have been known for decades. The risks are common sense. Today, we would be hard pressed to find someone who would deny the dangers of drunk driving.

Sadly, it is a somewhat different story when it comes to drugs. Drug-impaired driving is actually on the rise. Almost 3,100 incidents of drug-impaired driving were reported by police last year, 343 more than the previous year. Overall, the rate of drug-impaired driving increased by 11%. According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 40% of drivers who die in vehicle crashes test positive for drugs. By comparison, 33.3% test positive for alcohol. Figures like these show how crucial it is to get out the message about the risks and consequences of impaired driving, including driving under the influence of cannabis.

As we know, this past spring the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-45. Its overarching goal is to protect the health and safety of Canadians, keep cannabis out of the hands of youth, and prevent criminals from profiting from its production and sale. The bill proposes tough new measures to severely punish anyone who sells or supplies cannabis to young Canadians. That includes two new criminal offences with maximum penalties of 14 years in prison for those who sell or provide cannabis to anyone under the age of 18. These proposed measures complement a public education and awareness campaign informing Canadians, especially Canadian youth, about cannabis and its risks.

Budget 2017 directed an initial investment of \$9.6 million for public education and awareness on this topic. The public education campaign has begun and will continue over the next five years, because there is an immediate and continuing need to set the record straight on a number of issues related to cannabis. The funds will also be used to monitor the trends and perceptions of cannabis use among Canadians, especially youth. Too many people are under the

delusion that cannabis does no harm, which is completely false. Cannabis presents definite health risks.

Another myth centres on a person's ability to drive after consuming cannabis. We know that young people who test positive for drugs, alcohol, or both continue to be the largest group of drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes. However, when it comes to cannabis, research shows that many Canadians, including youth, do not take the risks seriously. According to an EKOS study conducted for Health Canada last year, 27% of Canadians have driven a vehicle while under the influence of cannabis. More than one-third of Canadians also reported that they had been passengers in vehicles driven by someone under the influence of cannabis. That number jumps to 42% among young adults and 70% among recent cannabis users.

● (1800)

The results of a national study conducted by the Partnership for a Drug Free Canada can help to explain these findings. It found that almost one-third of teens do not consider driving under the influence of cannabis to be as bad as doing so under the influence of alcohol. In addition, just over a quarter of Canadian young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 believe that a driver is either the same or, sadly, better on the road while under the influence of cannabis.

The reality paints a far different and more gruesome picture. Among all drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes in Canada between 2000 and 2010, 16.4% tested positive for cannabis, which is one in six.

It is clear that a large percentage of Canadians downplay or even flat out disbelieve the fact that cannabis impairs your ability to drive safely. That is one reason why Bill C-46 is such an important piece of legislation as a complement to Bill C-45.

Bill C-46 would strengthen Canada's laws to enforce a strict approach for those who drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including cannabis. Among other provisions, it would create new criminal offences for drug-impaired driving, and authorize new tools to allow police to detect drivers who have drugs in their system.

In September, the government announced up to \$274.5 million in funding to support the provisions of the bill. Up to \$161 million of that funding is earmarked for building law enforcement capacity across the country. It will help law enforcement and border officials detect and deter drug-impaired driving, and enforce the cannabis legislation and regulations. That includes training additional front-line officers in how to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug-impaired driving, and providing them with access to drug screening devices. It also includes funding to raise public awareness about the dangers of drug-impaired driving.

Private Members' Business

As announced last month, the Government of Canada is joining forces with Young Drivers of Canada to spread that important message. The project will involve the airing of public service announcements over the next year. Public Safety Canada and Young Drivers of Canada will also work together to share material through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media channels.

I think all of us in this House can agree that impaired driving is a serious problem in Canada. Awareness weeks like the one proposed by my colleague are another tool that we can use to foster good habits, recognize the dangers of impairment, and even to recognize impairment itself, because there seems to be some misconception about that, and to have safer roads and save lives.

I will be supporting this motion and I encourage my colleagues in the House to do the same.

• (1805)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Motion No. 148, which reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the importance of educating Canadians about the consequences of impaired driving due to alcohol, drugs, fatigue or distraction, which, each year, destroys the lives and health of thousands of Canadians, by designating the third week of March, each year, National Impaired Driving Prevention Week.

This is a very timely and important issue that I believe all my colleagues in this House should be seized of, and I thank the Liberal member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for his dedication to this matter, and diligence in bringing this motion to the House.

For a long time, we have known about the consequences of drinking and driving, thanks to advocates like MADD Canada, and police and community initiatives. Drunk drivers have now become the pariahs of society, and rightfully so.

Statistics suggest the efforts made in the fight against impaired driving have saved 30,589 Canadian lives since 1982. Despite this number of lives saved, Transport Canada reports there has been a total of 39,487 alcohol-related fatalities on Canadian roads since 1982.

Impaired driving was the leading cause of driving injuries and deaths in Canada up until a few short years ago. In the fall of 2009, a milestone in human history occurred and slipped by almost unnoticed. For the first time, cell phones around the world were exchanging more data than phone calls. The preference for texting and emailing on cell phones has risen steadily, year by year, since 2009. Alongside this rise, so too has the incidence of injuries and deaths from distracted driving.

The message is clear. In my home province of Ontario, one person is injured or killed in a distracted driving collision every 30 minutes. Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to get into crashes that are serious enough to cause injury. Even when drivers use hands-free devices, they are less aware of the traffic around them. They tend to react more slowly, and in fact may not detect the danger at all, failing to see up to 50% of the information in their driving environment.

Drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash. Distracted driving is now the number one risk on Canadian

roads, with distraction being a contributing factor in 93% of rear-end collisions. A study found that in 80% of collisions, the driver had looked away from the road three seconds prior to the crash. At 90 kilometres an hour, checking a text for five seconds means that a driver will have travelled the length of a football field blindfolded.

Distraction is a factor in about four million motor vehicle collisions in North America every year, including in 10% of fatal crashes, 18% of injury crashes, and 16% of all police reported motor vehicle traffic crashes. Almost half of all people killed in collisions where a teenager was distracted were teenagers themselves. No text, no tweet, no call, no post is worth a life.

In my riding, on October 24, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry held an enforcement blitz on Highway 35, just north of Norland, in the city of Kawartha Lakes. Conservation officers said the road check focused primarily on moose hunters travelling back from their camps in the Minden and Bancroft areas. Numerous drivers throughout the evening failed to stop even though officers were holding stop signs, were wearing reflective gear, and had two vehicles with emergency lights flashing. One driver blamed their dog as the distraction, while another, completely oblivious, slammed on the brakes at the last minute and skidded right by the officers.

It takes just a few seconds of distraction to kill a father, mother, aunt, or uncle working on the side of the road. Earlier this month at the end of a province-wide campaign, Vancouver police were astounded after pulling over a driver with a tablet and phone taped to their steering wheel. During the campaign Vancouver Police issued nearly 2,000 distracted driving tickets in one month.

Since the beginning of January, Montreal police have handed out more than 10,000 citations to motorists for using their cell phones while driving. According to police, distracted driving remains the number one cause of collisions on roads in Quebec. From 2012 to 2016, 32.9% of fatal crashes and 41.7% of collisions leading to serious injuries in Quebec were linked to distracted driving.

• (1810)

In Edmonton, distracted driving infractions were up nearly 60% in the first quarter of this year.

In Saskatchewan, during the first two months of the year, distracted driving charges were up a staggering 197% over the same period in 2016. The year before, 5,700 collisions were linked to distracted driving, resulting in 36 deaths, over 800 injuries, and thousands of families in Saskatchewan whose lives have forever been changed.

Last year more than 140 Nova Scotians were killed or involved in serious collisions due to distracted driving.

Private Members' Business

In my home province of Ontario, it is much the same. The Ontario Provincial Police have said that in its jurisdiction, car crashes caused by distracted driving have come to outnumber those caused by intoxication or speeding. As of September, 1,158 collisions were due to drunk drivers, 4,700 were due to speeding, and just fewer than 6,400 were due to distracted driving.

Tragically, deaths related to this driving epidemic are on the rise. As of Aug. 28, 47 people had died because of distracted driving, which is a 16% increase compared to the same time last year. Another 26 lives were taken by distracted drivers before the close of 2016, making it the fourth year in a row that distracted driving led to the highest number of deaths on OPP-controlled roads.

Over the summer, Ontario highways have been the stage for a series of horrific and deadly vehicle accidents due to distracted driving. On May 11, four people died and two others were seriously injured in a seven-vehicle pileup on Highway 401 east of Kingston, Ontario. The driver of a transport truck approached a construction zone and failed to stop, crashing into vehicles at the end of the traffic queue. The impact was such that a vehicle was crushed and became engulfed in flames, killing the family trapped inside.

On July 27, in Georgina, on Highway 48, not too far from my riding, a dump truck hauling gravel collided with five vehicles, having failed to slow down for stopped traffic. Two died at the scene, and two others, including a 10-year-old boy, were airlifted with critical injuries.

Three days later, on July 30, in Chatham, a six-vehicle crash killed a mother and her son and seriously injured several others when a transport truck hit their trailer from behind, crushing it. The truck then mounted their pickup and pushed them down the road and into five other vehicles before stopping. The driver of the truck was not paying attention and did not even see the stopped traffic. The family was on their way home from a camping trip.

Just this past Halloween night, a chain reaction of collisions caused a 14-vehicle pileup that killed three people and left Highway 400, about an hour north of Toronto, littered with tangled, twisted metal and a series of explosions that melted the vehicles right to the asphalt. While the investigation is ongoing, driver distraction is the leading theory for this incident.

In another incident, which I fear will not be the last, a native of my town of Lindsay, Robert Griffioen, while visiting family in Oklahoma City, in the United States, was out for a run on August 20. He was killed instantly by a teenager who fell asleep going 80 kilometres per hour through a red light. Robert grew up in Lindsay and attended Heritage Christian School and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School. He loved sports, especially running. He was also an army cadet and a reservist. He loved his community and he loved his country. He leaves behind a grieving widow and a 5-year-old son who miss him each and every day.

The time is now. We cannot wait any longer. We need to raise awareness. We need to get this message out. Distracted driving kills. It maims. It destroys lives and tears families apart.

Next year on Canada Day, though, 220 days from now, the government intends to legalize marijuana. This raises some very serious concerns for Canadians from coast to coast and the police

officers sworn to protect them. The irony is that this motion is raised by a member of the same government bent on speeding up legalization before the guidelines and the public education are in place. I do not really understand it. We need to make our roads safer, not more dangerous, and we need to do that now. We all know that education is the key.

I am pleased to take a stand and commit my support for this motion against distracted driving.

• (1815)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it is to speak to this very important motion introduced to the chamber by my friend and colleague, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

I appreciate the fact that the member's daughter is here. I think his daughter is very proud of her dad and dad is very proud of his miracle child. It is always nice to get that personal story.

Listening to what other members across the way are saying about the motion suggests that my friend has taken this issue and captured the imagination of the House of Commons. He is doing a fantastic job representing his constituents by identifying an issue that has obviously touched the lives of so many Canadians in all regions of our country, and for that the member, my colleague and friend, should be applauded.

It is not too often that we get an opportunity to have motions such as this debated in the chamber. In four years, there may be 150 or 155 submitted, and a much small number will actually pass the House. However, listening to members, I am hopeful we will see this motion pass. I understand Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD, is behind the motion as well. so expect it will pass.

I am looking forward to the motion passing the next time it comes before us, which will likely be some time in February. The motion would designate the third week of March each year as national impaired driving week. In that sense, the timing is perfect. However, I would challenge members on all sides of the House, as we show our support for the this, that we think about December, which is one of those months where people are inclined to drink and drive. We have seen so much progress over the last number of years, but we could give that extra push this December by reflecting on the debate we have heard tonight.

It was not only touching to hear my colleague and friend speak, but also my colleagues in the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party who spoke from their personal perspectives. That is important. A lot of effort has been put forward from a range of individuals and from organizations such as MADD, which has been doing some fine work.

However, I would like to bring this to some of our schools. When I graduated high school, we did not have the "Safe Grad" concept. We have gone so much further. One of my colleagues made reference to a time when there was a fine for drinking and driving, and it was fairly basic even if there was an accident. Look how far we have come.

When I was in high school, drinking and driving was not necessarily frowned upon. Today, it is not only frowned upon, but it is a major issue with respect to graduations. I think of Sisler High School, Maples Collegiate, Children of the Earth, R.B. Russell, and St. John's High School. Young people have taken this issue on, ensuring, as much as possible, that there is a very strong educational component to this. We need to realize the victims and the harm this has caused to society. We have heard about this in the speeches this evening.

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize, but the member will have a little over five minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I note the issue we are taking up tonight is a great concern for the NDP members on this side of the House about violence against women. The particular focus of the original question was around women in the Northwest Territories. They experience nine times the national rate of violence against women. Eighty per cent have no access to victims services, 85% have no violence-against-women shelter that they can enter, and many of them have no phones. How can they call for help if there is no phone?

This concern has been echoed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It is a body that tracks Canada's fulfillment of its commitments to the United Nations in this particular area. Every five years we get a report card. This is last year's report card. It says that the committee is concerned about the lack of shelters, support services, and other protective measures for women of gender-based violence, which reportedly prevents them from leaving their violent partners. The committee recommended strengthening services for women who are victims of gender-based violence by establishing shelters throughout the territory of Canada and ensuring the availability of psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration programs. The committee also noted with concern the insufficient measures taken to ensure that all cases of murdered and missing indigenous women are duly investigated and prosecuted.

The government's response has been that although the government had promised to protect women and girls experiencing domestic abuse and violence, in the budget this spring it announced instead \$20 million each year over the next five years. That is going to be spent within governments and for the RCMP, rather than a plan to directly fund services to victims. The Liberals' commitment is almost the same as their commitment to space exploration and I would have thought we could look after things at home first. Given especially that spousal violence and sexual assault cost the economy an estimated \$12 billion a year, we should spend on this the way that countries like Australia do. They are way ahead of us so far as

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establishing a national action plan and funding victims services support.

I note also repeated urging from many parties in different provinces to fund domestic-violence leave. This means that if a woman has to leave her partner she has a few days, kind of like sick pay in her workplace, that she could take to find a new apartment to resettle her family and then be able to return to work. Risking their job and that one link to economic security is a terrible thing. Again and again, witnesses at the status of women committee and advocates and labour organizers across the country have urged that Canada establish a paid domestic-violence leave. It does not need to be used very often, but when it is needed it could help enormously. The current government has offered just three days of leave, unpaid.

I would like to hear from the minister's representative what the actionable items are that the government is taking right now that would make women in our country safer today.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as always, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this adjournment debate. As the Minister of Status of Women has said, this government places gender at the heart of the work we do. This includes putting in place measures to prevent and address gender-based violence. To meet this commitment, the minister launched "It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence."

This strategy build on federal initiatives already under way and coordinates existing programs. It lays the foundation for greater action and is based on three pillars that will improve Canada's overall response to this form of violence, including prevention; support for survivors and their families; and, very importantly, promotion of responsive legal and justice systems. Through this strategy, gaps in support for diverse populations will be addressed, including women and girls; indigenous people; LGBTQ2 members; gender non-conforming people; and those living in northern, rural, and remote communities, as the member just referred to; people with disabilities; newcomers; children and youth; and seniors. Men and boys will also be engaged in important initiatives.

The strategy includes important investments as part of a government-wide approach, including \$100.9 million over five years and \$20.7 million per year thereafter to support the implementation of this work.

The strategy includes the creation of a gender-based violence knowledge centre within Status of Women Canada to better align existing resources across government and support the development and sharing of research and data for enhanced coordination of actions on gender-based violence. It will serve as a hub for sharing information between and among federal, provincial, and territorial governments, researchers, and service providers.

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Status of Women Canada will fund projects to support diverse groups of survivors. New investments will also support a range of activities by other federal partners to address online child sexual exploitation, support members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families affected by violence, develop and deliver cultural competency training to RCMP officers, and enhance the settlement program for newcomers.

Yesterday, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development announced a 10-year \$40 billion national housing strategy that will help reduce homelessness and improve the availability and quality of housing for Canadians in need. As part of the national housing strategy, our government is taking further action to support access to shelters as a priority. As a result of this strategy, 4,000 more shelter spaces will be created or repaired for survivors of family violence.

This is in addition to the budget investment in 2016 of \$89.9 million over two years to enhance Canada's networks of shelters and transition houses through the construction or renovation of over 3,000 shelter spaces off reserve, with an additional \$10.4 million over three years allocated to support the renovation and construction of new shelters for victims of family violence in first nation communities. Of course, that addresses the Northwest Territories issue the member brought up. Finally, a further \$33.6 million over five years will support shelter operations on reserve.

● (1825)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, on Saturday, the world marks the beginning of elimination of violence against women campaign. This has been running for decades and there are 16 days of action that run from Saturday right through to December 10, which is Human Rights Day.

I want to salute in particular the Vancouver Island University Students' Union and the Women's Collective, who have a whole range of on-the-ground action items that will make women safer and change lives right now. On Monday they will launch their Clothesline Project, which symbolizes the airing dirty laundry and engages people in conversations about domestic violence. I salute the work of these students and activists in our community, which is making a difference right now.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I salute the activities going on in the member's community. Yesterday our Minister of Status of Women launched 16 days of activism here in Ottawa at a local high school.

Back to the adjournment debate, in addition to the measures outlined previously, in budget 2017 we took further action by investing in a new national housing fund, with \$300 million invested over the next 11 years for northern housing and \$225 million invested over the next 11 years for off-reserve indigenous housing, and by expanding the homelessness partnering strategy. Both prioritize vulnerable populations, including survivors of family violence.

These actions further highlight our government's commitment to helping meet the needs of Canadians by addressing and preventing all forms of gender-based violence and by supporting survivors in important and valuable ways.

● (1830)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am thankful to be able to further discuss the issue of the Somass River and the sockeye salmon run. I want to begin by underlining the real and significant importance of the Somass River salmon run in our riding. The Alberni Valley used to be a booming and thriving community that sent bucketloads of tax revenue to the federal government, thanks to a strong resource-based economy. This is no longer the case, as we have seen a tenfold increase over the last 10 years of raw logs, which is killing the value-added forest sector. Housing costs are skyrocketing, poverty is increasing, and the opioid crisis has taken its toll, as it has in other communities across B.C. and Canada. In fact, a recent StatsCan report shows that the Alberni Valley has the highest proportion of low-income people in British Columbia.

The nearby Somass River fishery represents an annual direct financial contribution of \$12 million or more to the Alberni Valley and the surrounding Tseshaht and Hupacasath nations, and up to \$40 million in spinoff activity annually. Historically, this run produces about 1.2 million, and up to 1.9 million, returning sockeye per year. This year we started the year with less than 170,000 forecast, and we hit just over 300,000. This is critical and is deemed to be in a red zone by the department of Fisheries and Oceans.

With a dramatically shortened season, our sockeye fishers took a massive hit to their income, and then most of them did not even have enough hours to qualify for employment insurance benefits. I want people to consider the impact on a seasonal worker whose entire industry is shut down for most of the season and who will receive no income and no financial support for the entire year.

We called on the government for extended EI. I took this to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, who sent me to the minister of labour, who then sent me to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and then the parliamentary secretary of that department came back and asked me to go back to the department of Fisheries and Oceans minister. We have been getting the runaround. We have not had any response. People are needing support in our communities. It was a ministerial department merry-go-round, and today I am still looking for an answer for my constituents.

This is what I really need to know. Were the qualifying hours for EI previously reduced for fishers on the east coast during a time of crisis? If so, can we do that for our fishers on the west coast, and if not, why not? My constituents need the government's help.

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The other issue related to the Somass River sockeye fishery is the long-term health of the fishery. The Liberal government created the coastal restoration fund to help restore coastal aquatic habitats. We have had a group called the West Coast Aquatic Stewardship Association, an incredible group, submit an application for funding under this program to enhance the Somass River sockeye run. Unfortunately, that application was rejected for what we think are questionable reasons. Time does not allow me to expand on this today, but I had a discussion with DFO officials and the minister through correspondence and in person, and I remain unconvinced of their reasoning. It is important to note that we actually received more money under the Harper government and the Conservatives for that river.

We know that the Somass River sockeye run is an important local economic driver for the Alberni Valley, the Tseshaht, and the Hupacasath and is a fragile, delicate ecosystem that is in a state of crisis. Knowing this, the Liberal government is still refusing to offer economic relief to our fishers, nor will it fund the restoration and enhancement of the Somass River fishery.

To close, what are we supposed to do, and what am I supposed to tell my constituents about the Liberal government's commitment to our economic and environmental well-being in Courtenay—Alberni?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to state for the record that my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, has made the conservation of Pacific salmon a top priority for his department. The minister is taking a leadership role with both global and domestic actions to address the trend of declining stocks.

This government understands the economic and cultural importance of this resource. Pacific salmon contributes to the B.C. economy and creates jobs in our coastal and local communities. This is why we are reinvesting in science, and engaging with indigenous groups, recreational fishers, and other stakeholder groups to support initiatives that will promote the recovery of these stocks.

For instance, in budget 2016, this government allocated \$197.1 million in ocean and freshwater science. This is helping us deploy additional scientists to work on Pacific salmon. We remain committed to the conservation of wild Pacific salmon and the broader salmonid enhancement program, which will receive \$27 million in federal funding this year, as well as a new \$75-million coastal restoration package as part of our \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan. Another \$1.4-billion investment, as a result of the department's recent comprehensive review, has been added to support more evidence-based decision-making, more scientists, more habitat restoration, and more community partnerships.

The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard also has a mandate and a commitment to review the Fisheries Act to restore lost protections and incorporate modern safeguards. We are confident that any changes that will be brought forward to the Fisheries Act will benefit the habitat and conservation of all fish species, including Pacific salmon.

This government recognizes that strong and concerted action on the domestic front alone is not enough for the full stewardship of this important resource. We need to be active and forceful on the

international front as well. I am pleased that Canada is currently in negotiations with the U.S. on the Pacific Salmon Treaty for five of the fishing chapters. These fishing chapters establish the requirements to conduct stock assessment, catch-monitoring, escapement-monitoring, and stock-monitoring activities. Signed and ratified in 1985, this treaty commits our two countries to work together on the conservation and sustainable management of Pacific salmon. The treaty is critical to the protection of Pacific salmon because of the salmon migration patterns. Salmon that spawn in Canadian rivers will often travel through U.S. waters over the course of their life cycle, prior to returning to their natal stream. A high degree of bilateral co-operation is essential to limit their interception by harvesters in U.S. waters and vice versa.

Finally, we will seek to ensure that Canadian cultural, social, and economic interests are safeguarded in the renewal of the treaty. Pacific salmon can only be protected if Canada works both domestically and internationally. To this end, this government remains fully engaged and committed.

● (1835)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I am going to read a quote from Chief Cynthia Dick from the Tseshaht First Nation. She states, "Salmon has always been an important part of who we are as Tseshaht people. We rely on our salmon and our fishery beyond providing food security and to support our local economy. It's a major part of our culture, identity, and it brings us together as people."

The government talks about indigenous people being its most important relationship, but we do not see it in our community. In fact, it is fighting the Nuu-chah-nulth people in court. The Liberals talk about their \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan, but we are not seeing the help that we need. They talk about helping those who are not in the middle class join the middle class. We have the highest poverty in British Columbia. I have met with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, the assistant deputy minister, and DFO staff. I have met with a lot of people around this issue and we are not getting any answers, just more photo ops, and more statements that do not back up their whole mantra.

We need help. Is this member going to talk about—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his passion on this issue. I will assure him that the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard has made the conservation of Pacific salmon a top priority and is working very hard to address the trend of declining stocks.

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This government remains committed to the conservation of wild Pacific salmon by injecting new investments into federal funding this year to support more evidence-based decision-making. We are hiring more scientists, supporting more habitat restoration projects, and developing more community partnerships. I hope the hon. member would support that.

Finally, Pacific salmon can only be protected if Canada works both domestically and internationally. To this end, this government remains fully engaged and committed.

• (1840)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my turn to wrap up another wonderful day here in the House with you.

I will start by doing something I rarely do. I will quote myself. I will quote what I said on June 20. This is the question I asked about the appointment of the official languages commissioner:

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

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

That is what prompted me to select this topic for tonight's adjournment debate. I will be talking about it shortly. I think talking about the appointment of the official languages commissioner today is timely, but first, a little background.

The Liberals suffered a major setback when the candidate chosen for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages resigned before she had even been officially appointed, following fierce controversy. What was that controversy? It is worth remembering that Ms. Meilleur's qualifications were never in question. The issue was her political affiliation with the Liberals. The announcement caused an instant outcry, because it was seen as a highly partisan choice by the government opposite.

Ms. Meilleur, a former Ontario Liberal minister, added further fuel to the fire when she admitted that she had been in contact with two members of the Prime Minister's inner circle during the appointment process. At the time, the leader of the opposition said that, by dropping out, Ms. Meilleur had demonstrated better judgment than the Prime Minister. It would seem that history has proven him right.

Just recently, on November 7, Manon Cornéliier wrote in *Le Devoir* that the Trudeau government is utterly useless at making appointments, having failed to appoint a single independent officer of Parliament in two years.

It boggles the mind to think about it. In two years, the Liberals have not been able to appoint a single independent officer of Parliament. Maybe there are not enough card-carrying Liberals who are qualified for these positions, in which case I would urge them to look elsewhere. There are other places they can look besides their

own database of card-carrying Liberal Party members. The Liberals need to realize that they botched the appointment process for an extremely important position.

Today we learned that the Liberals have chosen a new Commissioner of Official Languages. The announcement was made not to the leaders of the opposition parties, but to the Canadian Press.

Could my colleague tell me whether the Liberals have chosen a new Commissioner of Official Languages as an officer of Parliament? A yes or no answer will do.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that the Government of Canada appointments that have been made were open and transparent and chose individuals with great merit. The question that the member originally posed was interesting. He said that we are appointing Liberals. Hundreds of appointments have been made, and I would be challenged to come up with names of Liberals that I am aware of. However, there is one person I am aware of, and I think a lot of Canadians are aware, and that is Kim Campbell. Kim Campbell is not a Liberal. She was a Progressive Conservative prime minister and, yes, the beneficiary of an appointment.

The reason I say that is that Canadians should know and understand, and I would suggest maybe even possibly appreciate, that there was a significant change in the manner appointments were being made since the last federal election. It highlights the open, transparent, and merit-based appointments. We have seen real, tangible results as a direct result of the open way appointments are being made. In fact, I suggest to my colleague across the way that the results are in the numbers. He will see very encouraging numbers. All Canadians are eligible to apply for federal appointments, and this government bases choice on merit and the credentials people have.

Under this new process, close to 400 appointments have been made. Think about this: almost 60% of those appointments are women, more than 12% are visible minorities, and 10% are indigenous. I know my friends across the way would recognize that, under this new process, no politicization has taken place. They might find that hard to believe, but I would encourage him to believe us on that point. That is the reason I mentioned the appointment of the former prime minister, Kim Campbell.

This new process will help strengthen trust in our democracy and ensure the integrity of our public institutions. Our aim is simple: to identify high-quality candidates who are committed to the principle of public service and embrace public service values. Further, the new appointment process will help achieve things such as gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity.

I suggest that Canadians can continue to apply for positions on commissions, boards, crown corporations, agencies, and tribunals across the country as the selection processes for more positions continue to be launched. It is an open and transparent process that is based on merit, and I would encourage Canadians to continue doing what they have done and apply for these positions.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1845)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, it is an open process based on membership.

[*Translation*]

The Commissioner of Lobbying and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner are in their third interim terms of office. The Information Commissioner announced that she will be leaving at the end of her term in June. She agreed to stay for another six months. The official languages commissioner has yet to be confirmed, and we still do not have a chief electoral officer, even with an election just two years away.

I hope that the Liberals are going to do things right so that Raymond Th  berge, a Franco-Manitoban whose name appeared in the news today, does not fall victim to another botched process by the Liberals. I hope that this time they will follow the rules and consult the leaders of the opposition so that they do not make anyone else go through what Ms. Meilleur went through.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, clearly actions speak louder than words on this particular issue, and I would suggest that members across the way really need to take a broader look at all the appointments that have been made. The member across the way says, or implies, that they are all Liberals. I would be interested in seeing the names the member says are all Liberal appointments. I could not say whether 98% of them have Liberal Party memberships or ever had Liberal Party memberships. What I know is that the government does not make membership part of the criteria. What is important is what they bring to the table. Those are the types of appointments that have been made by this government. Canadians should feel confident in that.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 6:50 p.m.)

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