



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Friday, December 8, 2017**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 8, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### EXPUNGEMENT OF HISTORICALLY UNJUST CONVICTIONS ACT

**Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness)** moved that Bill C-66, An Act to establish a procedure for expunging certain historically unjust convictions and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-66.

I, along with all members, was in the House for the landmark apology that was offered by the Prime Minister to the LGBTQ2 community. The apology was then echoed by every party leader in the House. It was an incredibly moving moment.

I remember debating same sex marriage in the House. I remember how difficult the debate was and how proud I was to support the legislation at the time. To see how much progress we have made on this issue as a country is very heartening.

I attended an event that the Canadian Human Rights Voice hosted, where Todd Ross was honoured, and he shared his story. He served in the Canadian military with distinction. However, as a very young man, he was forced, through lie detector tests, to come out to two strangers in a room that he was gay, before he had the opportunity to come out to anybody else, and he was forcibly removed from our military. To hear him share his story, and what that apology by our Prime Minister and every party leader meant to him was so important. We already see the effects of that apology. However, that apology in and of itself is not enough.

The Prime Minister's assertion that the injustices will never be repeated again, that we will not make the same mistakes is essential. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that we work with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit communities to make

right past wrongs and to ensure this never happens again. We are proud of the relationship we have with this community, but we recognize how much work needs to be done. Bill C-66 is a critical part of that.

It is difficult for many of us to fathom that there was a time in our history where laws allowed persons to be charged, prosecuted, and criminally convicted simply because of who they loved. LGBTQ2 Canadians were humiliated, imprisoned, and saddled with criminal records because of their sexual orientation. They were forced to live with permanent stains on their lives when they had done nothing wrong, until now.

Bill C-66, the expungement of historically unjust convictions act, would create a process to permanently destroy the records of a conviction of offence involving consensual activity between same sex partners that would be lawful today. It would give the Parole Board of Canada jurisdiction to order or refuse to order expungement of a conviction. It would deem a person convicted of an offence for which expungement was ordered never to have been convicted of that offence.

This is very different from other processes that currently exist today. For example, a record suspension or pardon, the purpose of which is to remove barriers to reintegration for former offenders, does not destroy the criminal record. It sets aside for most purposes, but the criminal record could be disclosed or revoked in certain circumstances when public safety is at risk. Also, record suspensions or pardons cannot be granted posthumously, meaning those who have died do not get an opportunity to have their name cleared.

In contrast, the government fully recognizes that those convictions constitute a historic injustice and that they should not be viewed as former offenders. They are not only wrong today but they were wrong then, in violation of our charter, and of fundamental rights. These convictions were for an act that should never have been a crime. However, this expungement process will allow these convictions to be fully and permanently removed from federal databases.

For thousands of Canadians impacted, the process will be straightforward. Applying will be free of charge. Those eligible to apply directly can do so to the Parole Board. In the case of deceased persons, a family member, loved one, or other appropriate representative will be able to apply on their behalf. This is consistent with the recommendation of Égale Canada's human rights trust.

*Government Orders*

Applicants will need to provide evidence that the conviction meets certain criteria, including that the act was between same-sex individuals, that it was consensual, and that those involved were at least 16 years of age or subject to a close in age defence under the Criminal Code.

Upon confirmation of a successful application, the record of the conviction can be destroyed. That means once the Parole Board orders expungement, the RCMP will permanently destroy any record of the conviction in its custody. It will also notify any federal department or agency that to its knowledge has any records of the conviction and direct it to do the same. Relevant court and municipal and provincial forces will be notified of the expungement order as well.

Expungement offers more than a clean criminal record check. It is recognition that the conviction was unjust and that it never should have occurred in the first place. It is recognition that it was inconsistent with the fundamental rights now protected under the charter of rights and freedoms.

All of this is not to say that there will be blanket expungement. Indeed, we want to ensure we are only catching those who meet the set criteria. Criminal records for individuals convicted of non-consensual sexual activity will continue to be upheld. Applications submitted for an ineligible offence or by an ineligible applicant will also be rejected. Furthermore, an automatic expungement process would be irresponsible as it could result in the expungement of records for acts that are still criminal.

However, those eligible will find the process to expunge their record very straightforward. This includes military service members whose offences sometimes were prosecuted under the National Defence Act. That is why we have allowed for a schedule of eligible offences that will apply to convictions under the Criminal Code as well as convictions under the National Defence Act.

Applications must be for offences listed in the schedule of the act, and initially this will include buggery, gross indecency, and anal intercourse.

The act would allow for the Governor-in-Council, in future, to make other historically unjust convictions eligible for expungement by amending the schedule of eligible offences, and as necessary, criteria through order in council.

Given the historic nature of these offences, if court or police records are not available, sworn statements may be accepted as evidence.

It should be noted that anyone attempting to mislead the Parole Board about a historical offence can be charged with perjury.

To put all of this in place, the government has set aside \$4 million over two years to implement this new process. Proactive outreach will also be undertaken to increase awareness of the initiative, the criteria, and the application process among potential applicants. The government will work with federal partners and stakeholders from the LGBTQ2 community to inform potential applicants.

It is now incumbent upon us to ensure that happens sooner rather than later.

The moment the bill is passed we can begin accepting applications, which is why I would urge all members to pass the bill as expeditiously as possible. The Parole Board of Canada can begin accepting applications as soon as this legislation is brought into force.

At the same time the government introduced the bill, it announced a settlement in the class action lawsuit for actions related to the purge. This will provide up to \$145 million to former public servants and military and RCMP members impacted by state-sponsored systemic oppression and rejection.

The agreement in principle also includes a minimum investment of \$15 million by the Government of Canada for projects that will record and memorialize those historic events, so we never forget our past, so we never repeat it again in the future. That includes museum exhibits curated by the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. It includes a national monument located right in Ottawa, along with an education package memorializing the historic discrimination against the LGBTQ2 community.

As I have mentioned, all of this represents an important step but not a panacea. Working to create the inclusive and diverse country we want will take sustained effort and collaboration on all our parts.

As the Prime Minister noted in his apology, “Discrimination against LGBTQ2 communities is not a moment in time, but an ongoing centuries-old campaign. We want to be a partner and ally to LGBTQ2 Canadians in the years going forward.”

• (1010)

That is why we have been and will continue to work hard to address issues impacting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, and two-spirit individuals.

I am deeply proud of what the government has accomplished to date and of the work that is still ongoing. Just over a year ago, the Prime Minister named the hon. member for Edmonton Centre as his special adviser on LGBTQ2 issues. An LGBTQ2 secretariat has also been established within the Privy Council to support government initiatives on these issues.

With the recent passage of Bill C-16, gender identity and gender expression are now prohibited grounds for discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act. Bill C-16 also expands hate propaganda offences in the Criminal Code to protect identifiable groups that are targeted for their gender identity or expression. Another piece of legislation, Bill C-39, has been introduced to repeal section 159 of the Criminal Code.

Work is also under way to develop a long-term vision for blood services that ensures safety and non-discrimination in donation practices. In fact, the Minister of Health was instructed in her mandate letter to work with the provinces and territories toward that very goal.

*Government Orders*

The government is working toward adopting policies and practices that remove unnecessary collection of gender markings in government forms. We are also working to introduce an X gender designation on passport applications. This would ensure Canadians who do not identify as either male or female receive the same services and support as everyone else does.

The government also plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2019. It will do so by providing funding for initiatives that increase awareness of the people, actions, and struggles that led to that milestone.

For example, more than \$770,000 in federal funding will be provided to the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust to support the “Legalizing Love: The Road to June 27, 1969” travelling exhibit project.

I am also proud to note that Canada is actively promoting LGBTQ2 rights on the international state, including as co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition.

Since 2014, we have provided \$2.9 million in funding for projects that support violence prevention programs, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts in support of LGBTQ2 communities abroad. These include initiatives aimed to combat homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia in education systems.

In Canada, we know that LGBTQ2 youth have a disproportionately high rate of homelessness. According to a 2016 Statistics Canada study, while members of LGBTQ2 communities make up between 5% and 10% of our population, they represent between 25% to 40% of our homeless youth. A new and unique facility, currently under construction in Toronto, will be exclusively dedicated to serving this very vulnerable group. The Egale Centre will offer transitional and emergency housing, as well as counselling services, for homeless LGBTQ2 youth.

Last week, the government announced just over \$47,800 in federal funding to help improve the Egale Centre's security. The funding will be used for the installation of security cameras and access control systems. The enhanced security measures will mean greater peace of mind and a safer and more secure facility, for the benefit of the Egale Centre's residents, staff and volunteers.

I am proud to stand with a government that is committed to protecting the fundamental human rights of all Canadians. All people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression must be able to live their lives free from stigma, violence, discrimination, or prejudice.

Sadly, as we know, there was a time in our history when the prevailing attitude to LGBTQ2 issues was very different from today. People could be criminally charged and convicted simply because of their sexual orientation. They could lose their jobs, their livelihoods, and their loved ones, or be barred from serving their country. They could be bullied, ostracized, and made a pariah by their own government.

The landmark bill we are discussing today is an important and necessary step toward righting the historical discrimination faced by LGBTQ2 Canadians for so many years. It is a key step we are

taking, but is only one of many. It is in the context of a world in which calls for equality are slowly being answered.

● (1015)

Just yesterday, the legalization of same-sex marriage occurred in Australia. It joined countries like the U.K., Germany, and many others. They are also looking at making reparations for the historic discrimination that happened to the LGBTQ2 communities within their countries.

We remain in a world in which many LGBTQ2 individuals are still forced to live in fear, fear of being rejected, fear of being hated, fear of facing violence or even facing death, just because of who they love. Sometimes the gaps appear so far apart, they are like worlds we cannot bring together. However, as the proverb goes, a river cuts through rock not because of its power, but because of its persistence, and the calls for an inclusive world in which diversity can thrive are stronger and more persistent than ever. The apology that was given by all of the leaders in this House was demonstrative of that. The fact that we can come together as a House and be able to stand and acknowledge our part with respect to the wrongs of the past, as well as to be able to talk about the future we want, not only for our country but for all people across the world, about basic human rights, and the right as basic and as simple as being able to love the person that one loves without fear of reprisal, is something that we can stand for and propagate.

I am proud to introduce this bill. I urge all members to support it expeditiously.

● (1020)

**Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pledge the NDP's support to work quickly to have the bill passed. Like many bills, it is not totally perfect, but we will move it forward.

I have one question. I am hoping the parliamentary secretary will be able to give a bit more detail with respect to it. He announced some funding to help with rolling out this legislation. I am wondering if the government will be looking at the fee for pardons. Normally, the fee charged by the Parole Board is \$600. I am wondering if the government is open to reducing that fee to zero, as the law was unjust, and people should be able to move forward without any cost to themselves.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for her support and her commitment to work on moving this legislation forward expeditiously. As she knows, the day that we get this legislation adopted is the same day that people can begin the process of making those applications and having their records expunged so they can move forward with their life, finally free of the stigma of these past convictions.

On the question of expungement, it will be free. The question of pardons is another matter. We are looking at pardons separately. This does not mean just because we are dealing with expungement that we will not be dealing with pardons. That simply will be dealt with in a separate piece of legislation, at which time we will be talking about things related to pardons, including the cost.

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his work on this file over so many years in office in this place.

*Government Orders*

I had a unique perspective during the apology. I had the opportunity to look up at the gallery, see the faces of the individuals who had suffered at the hands of their government simply because of who they love, see the power of the apology, and see the power of those words.

I was wondering if the parliamentary secretary could expand on the power of action to back up those words, and what this bill does to advance the government's and this Parliament's position toward the LGBTQ2 community. Could he provide comment on that?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for St. Catharines for his work on this file. I know that it is an area that is very important to him.

Certainly, the apology was powerful for all of us as we sat in our seats and had the opportunity to hear the Prime Minister speak and hear the other party leaders speak. We had the opportunity to witness in the gallery the impact of those words. As well, in our own communities, members have been able to talk to people who were really wronged in egregious ways, and who had to carry that around, and the feeling of vindication that they have, not only with the apology but the opportunity to be able to get the records expunged, and for that process to be different from other processes. This is not simply forgiving somebody because time has passed and we are trying to reintegrate them. This is saying to people that this should never have happened to them, and destroying that record is the clearest and the most powerful way we can do it.

That is why this bill is such an important compendium to the apology that we made. However, that unto itself is not enough either. We need to go through and look at every single way in any means that we can, to ensure that the types of injustices that occurred in the past do not get repeated in the future.

That is why we have our partnerships at the community level, and our other partnerships, to ensure that there are resources available to those people who face discrimination, whether they be in the LGBTQ2 community, or any other Canadian who is facing discrimination. In this way people will be given the resources to be able to fight back and to be able to live a life free from that kind of shadow being cast on them.

We would think that would be an easy thing in Canada. We have come a long way, but we still have a long way yet to go. That is why we do not hold this out as a panacea. There is more that has to be done. I tried to address some of that in my speech, but I think it is an important point that the member makes.

● (1025)

**Ms. Sheri Benson:** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the parliamentary secretary a follow-up question.

Pardon my ignorance; I do not come from a legal background. Could the hon. member clarify that if someone has their criminal record expunged, will he or she go back to not ever having a criminal record? If that is not the case, and I am missing a legal piece that I do not quite understand, is it that people will then have to also get pardons?

My question is this. If there is a cost involved in that process, will the government entertain not charging a fee with that? Could the

hon. member enlighten me a bit about the fact that there are maybe two steps to a process that I did not quite recognize?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, these are two separate processes.

Just to be very clear, because I think it is an important point, if somebody was convicted and we have three offences that are listed here, buggery, anal intercourse, or gross indecency, these are convictions that should have never occurred. They are a violation of people's fundamental Charter of Rights. We are acknowledging that these are a very different class of offences than any other because they should never have existed.

Expungement means a complete destruction of those records. They are gone. Once somebody applies for expungement, it is destroyed within their record. It does not exist any longer. It should be noted that that is only available for those offences where it was between consenting adults, where it was same sex in nature, where they were 16 years of age, or where there was a close in age provision, so that we are really dealing with just those.

The RCMP has said that there are about 9,000 on file. That does not mean that the full 9,000 are available for expungement because some of those might not have been consensual, or some of those individuals may have died and somebody might not exercise the right posthumously, although it was available for them to expunge it. This is very different than the process that exists for somebody who is seeking a pardon.

Somebody who is seeking a pardon, who broke a law in Canada and served their time, in whatever fashion that represented, and wants to get that removed from their record, cannot do so permanently. However, a pardon allows them as part of the rehabilitation process, to receive a pardon that is not a part of their immediately available criminal record. If that person committed an offence that was violently sexual in nature, and there was a check done to see if that person can work with a vulnerable part of the population, for example, children, then that record would actually show up even though there was a pardon. Expungement is very different from a pardon in that regard.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he could clarify section 23(1) of this act. It speaks to the schedule:

Subject to the conditions referred to in subsection (2), the Governor in Council may, by order, add to the schedule any item or portion of an item.

I do not exactly know the reference with which that might apply to this. Is it for other offences or other types of offences that might occur down the road? Are we only dealing with this particular issue on this particular genre of offence, and it does not apply to any other offences in the years to come, should we decide to have something else that we decide to deal with?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, the idea here is expungement should be the tool that is used exclusively for righting historic wrongs, for crimes that should never have been considered crimes, that were in fact violations of people's fundamental rights.

*Government Orders*

There are three specific types of crimes that are enumerated in this bill, which I referenced earlier: anal intercourse, buggery, and gross indecency. However, it does provide for the opportunity to expand that list, if it is determined at a future date that other such crimes existed that represented a historic wrong, in other words should never have been considered crimes and were a violation of people's human rights.

Again, we want to keep expungement narrowly limited to that specific type of application.

• (1030)

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are out of time. Perhaps in the next round of questions and comments, the hon. member might be able to make his intervention at that time.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to support Bill C-66, an act to establish a procedure for expunging certain historically unjust convictions and to make related amendments to other acts.

Today I will be short and sweet, because I believe that in this House we do have consensus, where all parties do agree that it is important to move forward on this.

As I have noted prior, I had the opportunity to speak to Canadians from coast to coast to coast who are part of the LGBTQ2 community. More specifically, I held consultations with several groups of individuals regarding the national apology. From all of the conversations and research that I did, one of the key requests from this community throughout this process was the request to expunge the records of Canadians who had been charged under the Criminal Code. The request to destroy and remove these judicial records would provide individuals the freedom of having their criminal records that have been looming over them for activities gone.

I had the opportunity to review this bill with the members for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and St. Albert—Edmonton, following its tabling. Like any bill, there will be questions on specific sections but, overall, I support the principle of this bill. When reviewing the bill, section 25 specifically outlines the eligibility for an applicant, including the type of conviction, consent, and age requirements, things that I believe are all very important. I feel that this perfectly in line and safeguards Canadians from being eligible for offences that are outside of this realm.

The proposed schedule of offences would impact all Canadians, including members of the LGBTQ2 community. This is extremely important as it covers the particulars of the offences. For Canadians who do not have a criminal record, it is hard to realize some of the negative impacts that it has on individuals in many different types of circumstances. Criminal records can have an overwhelmingly negative impact on employment opportunities and opportunities for career advancement. For travel to the United States or for immigration purposes, Canadians with a criminal record can be banned from entering many countries.

Now take into consideration the group of Canadians that this legislation is targeting are no longer viewed as guilty of criminal offences. How unfair would it be to allow them to still have a

criminal record, when we know that this is not a crime? It is totally life changing, and I believe that this legislation is doing its part.

As I indicated, I have had the opportunity to speak to many Canadians on this issue. From all of my consultations, every group and individual made the request to have the records of these criminal convictions expunged. It is truly obvious what needs to be done here.

As a Parliament, I believe it is extremely important that the legislation we have in front of us is done. It gives Canadians a way to move forward. I fully support Bill C-66 and look forward to seeing this legislation passed in order to see those who do not deserve these criminal records finally have some sort of peace. It is one step at a time, and I believe we are going in the right direction.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the work she has been doing to engage Canadians. I also want to thank her for her unequivocal support and for helping us move this forward in an expedited way. It is really only because of all-party co-operation that we have been able to get this done so quickly, which is particularly appreciated, given that there is so much happening as we wrap up and head toward the holidays.

I wonder if the member has any thoughts on the expungement and how this might impact some of the people she has been speaking to and what it might mean to them. Does she have any stories from those consultations that might help illuminate the power of what we are doing today?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Mr. Speaker, any viewers will probably find that Parliament is not going to be as exciting today as they want it to be, because we are all in agreement here. The expungement of these records opens up freedoms, the freedom for one to travel or the freedom to have a job. For instance, people are doing things that are not seen as crimes, but when they apply for a job, the record shows that they have a criminal record. Something that has been pardoned in the past still shows up as a criminal record, so this expungement is extremely important.

I am not a legal guru, but I understand the impact of this bill. We have talked to people who say that they cannot get a job because they have a criminal record for this, or they cannot take their kids to Disney World. We have to recognize that there are many families that just want to travel across the border. It may be for work or it may be for recreation, but they are excluded from travel. This would just give them another step towards having a life like every other Canadian, an equal life for all.

• (1035)

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to hear that my colleague is supporting this bill. As she and everyone else here knows, the NDP has been fighting for this cause for many years. We are happy that this bill has come forward at last, and we will obviously be supporting it. We are also pressing to have this bill passed expeditiously so that it can go through the House before we rise for the Christmas break.

*Government Orders*

I know that the member is supporting this bill. Will the Conservatives be supporting it, and will they support the expeditious passing of the bill so that this can get done and help these people?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Mr. Speaker, it is because of colleagues from his NDP caucus that I have learned so much, and I would like to thank the members from that caucus I had the ability to work with. For me, this has been life-transforming. It has really opened up a world of understanding and compassion. I see myself as compassionate, but I am understanding more.

One particular section does not specifically have to do with the LGBTQ community. It is about how this can be expanded. We want to make sure that all people in this community have equal rights and do not have this looming over them. As we move forward in committee, there will be that one little section we may have to look at. However, it is not going to have a negative impact on that community specifically. We look forward to working together on this.

**Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the NDP to support Bill C-66 and its quick passage into law.

For me, as a member of the LGBTQ2 community, the government's apology last week was a long awaited historic moment that paved the way for a more just and more inclusive Canada for everyone. I feel like I am walking on a path walked by so many brave and tireless activists throughout the last 50 years. I also want to acknowledge the important work of former New Democrat MPs such as Svend Robinson, Libby Davies, Bill Siksay, and Craig Scott, who paved the way for gay and lesbian Canadians in this House.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the work of my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, whose tireless efforts resulted in transgender and gender non-binary Canadians finally receiving the same protections and rights as all other Canadians.

Last week's apology from the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Canada was a very emotional day for many Canadians, as well as for me. Even as we celebrated the moment and looked forward to the righting of past injustices, the day also inevitably revived some darker memories of what Canadians have suffered.

In 1965, Everett Klippert, from Saskatchewan, became the last Canadian to be in jail because he was gay. He was declared a dangerous sexual offender and was sentenced to life in prison in 1966. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld his conviction until he was released in 1971, two years after then justice minister Pierre Trudeau's bill legalized consensual homosexual acts. Journalist John Ibbotson, who profiled Klippert, recently said in an interview:

He didn't see himself as a pioneer in the gay rights movement. He was just a guy who loved driving trucks and, as it turned out, loved men as well.

Everett was merely the last Canadian to have been imprisoned for who he loved.

There are countless Canadians whose lives have been shattered and altered immeasurably because they were persecuted for who they are. While the apology is welcomed and the right thing to do, there are many for whom it has come too late. It came too late for Everett Klippert.

Every change, every advancement in law, every protection of basic human rights enshrined in law and policy for members of the LGBTQ2 community has been achieved by dragging governments and public institutions kicking and screaming into doing the right thing. Let us hope that those days are over and that today is the day we commit, as Parliament, to end all state-sanctioned discrimination and to begin the long overdue restoration of justice for its victims. Let us hope that, indeed, as the headline for former NDP MP Svend Robinson's opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail* states, "For the countless Canadians humiliated by anti-gay policies, healing can finally begin".

Thanks to activists and allies here in Canada, we have seen a gradual shift away from persecution and unjust punishment and a slow but unstoppable recognition of rights for LGBTQ2 people. I want to share a brief timeline.

In 1969, homosexuality ceased to be a crime in Canada, but it still took two more years before Everett Klippert was released from jail.

In 1975, Doug Wilson, a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, was refused by the dean of the College of Education to supervise practice teachers in the school system, because he was a gay activist. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission dismissed his case of discrimination.

In December 1977, Quebec included sexual orientation in its human rights code, making it the first province in Canada to pass a gay civil rights law. By 2001, all provinces and territories had taken this step forward.

In 1978, Canada's new immigration act removed homosexuals from the list of inadmissible classes.

In 1979, the Canadian Human Rights Commission recommended in its annual report that sexual orientation be added to the Canadian Human Rights Act. The following year, MP Pat Carney tabled Bill C-242, which would have prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. It did not pass. NDP MP Svend Robinson introduced similar bills in 1983, 1985, 1986, 1989, and 1991.

● (1040)

In 1991, Robinson tried to get the definition of spouse in the Income Tax Act and the Canada Pension Plan Act to include "or of the same sex". In 1992, he tried to get the word "opposite sex" definition of spouse removed from Bill C-55, which would have added the definition to survivor benefit provisions in federal pension legislation. All the proposed bills were defeated.



*Government Orders*

In 1987, Don Cochrane, a professor of education at the University of Saskatchewan, organized the first Breaking the Silence conference to discuss gay and lesbian issues in the education system. The conference celebrated its 30th year this year, but that year, the organizers had to hire security to protect attendees from physical and verbal harassment and abuse from protesters.

In 1988, Svend Robinson became the first member of Parliament to come out. Robinson was first elected to the House of Commons in 1979, and in 2000, the B.C. riding of Burnaby Douglas, as it was called then, elected him for the eighth time.

In 1991, Delwin Vriend, a lab instructor at King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, was fired from his job because he was gay. The Alberta Human Rights Commission refused to investigate the case, because the Alberta Individual's Rights Protection Act did not cover discrimination based on sexual orientation. Seven years later, after he was fired for being gay, the case went all the way to the Supreme Court, and finally, on April 2, 1998, the high court unanimously ruled that the exclusion of homosexuals from Alberta's Individual's Rights Protection Act was a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Also that year, in my community, Gay & Lesbian Health Services of Saskatoon, now called OUTSaskatoon, opened its doors, thanks to the sheer determination and tenacity of Gens Hellquist. GLHS was started to serve the underserved health, social, and emotional needs of gays and lesbians in Saskatchewan.

In August 1992, in *Haig and Birch v. Canada*, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that the failure to include sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act was discriminatory. Federal justice minister Kim Campbell responded to the decision by announcing that the government would take the necessary steps to include sexual orientation in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

In November 1992, a landmark legal challenge was won by Michelle Douglas, who was fired from the military in 1989 for being a lesbian. The Federal Court finally lifted, in 1992, the country's ban on homosexuals in the military, and that year, for the first time, allowed gays and lesbians to serve with pride in the armed forces.

In May 1995, the Supreme Court ruled on the case involving Jim Egan and Jack Nesbit, two gay men who sued Ottawa for the right to claim the spousal pension under the Old Age Security Act. The court ruled against Egan and Nesbit. However, all nine judges agreed that sexual orientation was a protected ground.

In May 1995, an Ontario judge found that the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario infringed section 15 of the charter by not allowing same sex couples to bring joint application for adoption. Ontario became the first province to make it legal for same sex couples to adopt. British Columbia, Alberta, and Nova Scotia followed quickly after.

In 1996, the federal government finally passed Bill C-33 and added sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

In May 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that same sex couples should have the same benefits and obligations as opposite sex common-law couples and equal access to benefits from social programs to which they contribute.

In June of that year, although many laws would have to be revised to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling in May, Parliament voted 216 to 55 in favour of preserving the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

In February 2000, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Liberals introduced Bill C-23, the Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act, in response to the Supreme Court's main ruling. The act would give same sex couples who lived together for more than a year the same benefits and obligations as all common-law couples. On April 11, 2000, Parliament passed Bill C-23 with a vote of 174 to 72. The legislation gives same sex couples the same social and tax benefits as all couples.

• (1045)

In total, the bill affected over 68 federal statutes related to a wide range of issues: pension benefits, old age security, income tax deductions, bankruptcy protection, and the Criminal Code. Despite this, the definitions of marriage and spouse were left untouched.

On December 10, 2000, Reverend Brent Hawkes, of the Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto, read the first bans, an old Christian tradition of publishing or giving public notice of people's intent to marry, for two same-sex couples. Hawkes said that if the bans were read on three Sundays before the wedding, he could legally marry the couples. The two same-sex couples were married on January 14, 2001. The following day, the Ontario government reiterated the government's position, saying that the marriages would not be legally recognized.

The year 2000 was also the year that a Saskatoon Mount Royal high school teacher, Patti Rowley, attended a session at a school board convention by gay and lesbian health services. A year later, she started a gay-straight alliance in a high school in Saskatoon, at Mount Royal Collegiate. She has been facilitating a weekly meeting for students and teachers ever since, 22 years later.

In May 2002, then Ontario Supreme Court Justice Robert MacKinnon ruled that a gay student had the right to take his boyfriend to the prom. In July 2002, for the very first time, a Canadian court ruled in favour of recognizing same-sex marriages under the law. The Ontario superior court ruled that prohibiting gay couples from marrying was unconstitutional and violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

*Government Orders*

In February 2003, MP Svend Robinson unveiled a private member's bill that would allow same-sex marriages. The federal government had already changed several laws to give same-sex couples the same benefits and obligations as heterosexual common-law couples. In June of that year, the Ontario Court of Appeal upheld a lower court ruling to legally allow same-sex marriages. The judgment said "the existing common law definition of marriage violates the Couples' equality rights on the basis of sexual orientation..".

In June 2003, the Ontario government announced that the province would finally obey the law and register same-sex marriages. Nearly two dozen couples applied for marriage licences in Ontario on the following day.

In August 2003, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien vowed not to let religious objections alter his stand on same-sex marriage. He said that members of Parliament would be allowed to vote freely on the bill when it was introduced into the House of Commons, after his retirement in 2004.

In December 2003, the Ontario court ruled that Ottawa had discriminated against same-sex couples by denying benefits to their partners who had died before 1998. The court ruled that benefits would be retroactive to April 17, 1985, when equality rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect.

In December 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the federal government could change the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples. In February 2005, the federal government finally introduced the same-sex marriage bill in the House of Commons. The bill would give married same-sex partners the same legal protection as other married couples. In May of that year, a Canadian Forces sergeant and a warrant officer were married in the chapel at CFB Greenwood, Nova Scotia, in the military's very first gay wedding.

In June 2005, the controversial bill, Bill C-38, titled "Civil Marriage Act", passed final reading in the House of Commons, sailing through with a vote of 158 to 133. On July 20, 2005, the bill became law, and Canada became the fourth country in the world, after the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain, to finally and officially recognize same-sex marriage.

We can see that the road to the apology has been strewn with obstacles, and the struggle and resistance have been real and unrelenting. Each battle has been fought multiple times in multiple jurisdictions.

• (1050)

While governments, parliaments, police services, and other institutions, which were created to protect people, continued to persecute and prosecute LGBTQ Canadians, brave and courageous souls made change, positive change, despite governments. They did that one person, one family, one community at a time, and they saved people's lives. While the apology sadly came too late for some of these brave people, it does represent a much brighter future for those who remain. The apology is the proper first step, and we applaud the government for taking it.

New Democrats have been unwavering in calling for a just apology, and we are pleased that the government has announced that

it is including redress measures in the bill. An apology without any redress measures would have been just an apology, not a just apology. There are thousands of people with unjust historic convictions for consensual same-sex sexual activity still on the records, and these convictions continue to be a barrier for people when it comes to travel, volunteering, even to getting a job.

New Democrats have fought to make sure that expungement legislation was tabled at the same time as the apology, and we are committed to working together with all parliamentarians and government to get this legislation passed as soon as possible. By expunging the convictions for historic consensual same-sex activity, the government is ensuring that no unfairly applied discriminatory label or judgment can continue to have negative impacts on people's daily lives.

While Bill C-66 is not perfect, we believe that all of the issues in question are fixable without amending the bill and therefore should not cause delay in the passage of the bill. New Democrats would like to see the immediate implementation of a process for the expungement of criminal records for consensual same-sex sexual activity. Speedy follow-through on a redress measure is necessary to complete and validate the government apology.

Now that Bill C-66 is tabled, we want to also make sure that the government continues to make sure that Canadian Forces service records are revised, that it quickly moves on the tabled legislation to repeal section 159 of the Criminal Code, and, of course, that it finally ends the blood ban for men who have sex with men.

I would like to thank those who went before us, as well as everyone who continues to work toward a more inclusive and equal Canada. There remains, unfortunately, a lot still to do.

I chose to run to be a member of Parliament for Saskatoon West. My goal was to end homelessness. As we heard the parliamentary secretary mention, LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in homelessness in this country. It is estimated that between 25% and 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2. These young people are more vulnerable or at a higher risk of homelessness because of homophobia and transphobia. LGBTQ youth leave home most often because of violence and abuse. Their home is not safe for them. They often choose to live, literally on the street because they face homophobia and transphobia in our shelter systems and in support services. Despite human rights legislation, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and legalizing same-sex marriage, homophobia and transphobia are still very much a part of daily life in Canada, in our language, in our behaviour, and in the policies and practices of many of our helping institutions.

In the timeline I shared today, I highlighted important Canadian firsts that took place in my home province of Saskatchewan. These are important milestones that have improved the lives of LGBTQ2 Canadians. I would like to end my remarks with one final first.

*Statements by Members*

This fall, the first long-term LGBTQ2 youth home in Canada, Pride Home, was opened in my riding. The youth home is operated by the amazing organization OUTSaskatoon. In 2016, a survey by OUTSaskatoon found that 40% of the local LGBTQ2 youth had dealt with homelessness at some point in their short lives.

We all hope for the day that all LGBTQ2 youth, all youth, have a warm and supportive loving home, but, until then, thank goodness for organizations like OUTSaskatoon.

•(1055)

**Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, subsequent to the apology, we have read *Maclean's* reports about Lucie Laperle. She talked about how important and poignant the apology was for her, as a recognition of what she has been through and the trauma she has had over her lifetime. As we listened to the Prime Minister give the apology and we watched Lucie in the gallery, it was a powerful moment.

Could the hon. member tell us what this apology means, not just for today but for future generations of Canadians in this country?

**Ms. Sheri Benson:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for sharing those comments.

I organized a viewing of the government's apology for young people in my riding. Of course, I was here in Ottawa and not in Saskatoon, but I am looking forward to going home to see what their views are. They are very young, and they are looking forward. Some of the things that came up during the apology, both by the government and the other parliamentary leaders, probably told them about things they may never have known about.

An apology is an important first step. It starts a process. I think I mentioned in my comments that it is very important to move very quickly on this legislation. We do not want, and I do not think anybody in this House wants, just an apology. We want an apology that has redress, as far as it can go; no one can go back and have everything restored.

However, it is important that we co-operate across party lines and move as many pieces of legislation forward as soon as possible, hopefully before we go home for Christmas.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There will be eight minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments to the member for Saskatoon West when the House next resumes debate on the question.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

•(1100)

[English]

### GREAT HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Great Holiday Food Drive is an important annual event in St. Catharines that aims to stock our local food bank heading into the holidays. Demand is high, and volunteers throughout the community will pack the front lawn of city hall with generous donations from residents.

Our government has made great strides by putting forward policies that aim to reduce poverty, ranging from our recently announced affordable housing strategy to the Canada child benefit.

My hope is that one day we will no longer see the need for community food banks. However, until that day comes, I commend organizations like Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold and its executive director Betty-Lou Souter for the amazing work they do to help those in need throughout St. Catharines.

To Betty-Lou, her staff, and all the volunteers involved, and those who have donated, we give our thanks for all they are doing.

I know that Betty-Lou would want me to take the time to remind residents that there is still time to donate.

Merry Christmas.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### ORGANIZATIONS IN CHARLEVOIX

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, I attended the ceremony to distribute the Senate 150th anniversary medals. The medal was created by a special Senate committee to recognize the incredible contributions of individuals or organizations who stand out for their generosity and devotion and who often go unnoticed. I want to congratulate the Côte-de-Beaupré Optimist Club, which supports children in underprivileged neighbourhoods and helps many children remain integrated in the community in order to foster their development.

I also want to congratulate Ressource Genesis de Charlevoix, whose mission is to support the rehabilitation of people addicted to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and the Internet. It also provides support to the families of people affected. Its presence at the Charlevoix Casino as a resource in prevention is greatly appreciated. I am very proud of these two organizations in my riding for receiving this highly-deserved honour.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE STUDY

**Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise as chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to inform this House, and all Canadians, about our study on experiential learning.

I have spent my entire career either employing youth at the YMCA or helping them access work opportunities through the University of Waterloo co-operative education program. It is important that we do all we can to facilitate smooth school-to-work transitions for Canadian youth.

*Statements by Members*

We will explore youth issues, like unemployment and under-employment, volunteerism, internships, apprenticeships, co-op programs, and entrepreneurship. I call on all Canadians who wish to participate to submit a brief to the human resources committee's website.

I am looking forward to hearing from experts in this field and working to ensure that all Canadian youth have the opportunities and skills they need to succeed.

\* \* \*

**TOM ROBSON**

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House deeply saddened by the loss of a dear friend and community hero, Tom Robson. Tom was a World War II veteran who died yesterday at the age of 94, and he will be so deeply missed.

Tom joined the navy in Windsor on May 6, 1941, and fought in the Battle of Madagascar, defending ports in South Africa, Malta, Sri Lanka, Mumbai, Kolkata, and many more in the Indian Ocean. He spoke of the war in a matter of fact way. He once told me that "We were deep in enemy territory, laying mines in water laced with enemy traps, with U-boats travelling beneath us, and air bombers flying over top of us".

After the war ended, Tom was discharged and he returned to Windsor to reunite with his family. He knew the importance of community, setting an example for all through his service in the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 201 and the Knights of Columbus. Tom volunteered with St. Vincent de Paul and the Essex Area Food Bank, and drove cancer patients to and from their treatments and appointments.

The people of Essex honoured Tom's service last month at a dinner I attended where he was named 2017 Essex Citizen of the Year.

We are thankful for Tom's kindness, selflessness, courage, strength, and friendship. He will be missed by all.

\* \* \*

● (1105)

*[Translation]***HOUSING**

**Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, some 1.7 million Canadian families still do not have adequate housing, which is unacceptable. In a country as highly regarded and prosperous as Canada, everyone should have a roof over their head.

*[English]*

Under the leadership of the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the member of Parliament for Spadina—Fort York, our government took a big step toward achieving this goal with the first-ever national housing strategy.

*[Translation]*

Over the next 10 years, this strategy will help meet the housing needs of 530,000 households and reduce chronic homelessness by half in this country.

*[English]*

Recently, I met with local stakeholders from the Emily Murphy Non-Profit Housing Corporation, the Cumberland Not for Profit Housing Corporation, the Orleans-Cumberland Resource Centre, Habitat for Humanity Ottawa, and Place Perrault to discuss how the new Canada housing benefit will ensure stability for Orleans residents struggling with the basic costs of housing. We are all excited about the benefits this strategy will bring to the community.

\* \* \*

**CHRISTMAS**

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker,

This Liberal government left Canadians in the cold,  
pension bills and ethical ills,  
they all deserve some coal.  
Balanced budgets are a fairy tale, they say.  
Canadians know, as deficits grow, our kids will pay someday.  
He led them down Ottawa town right to the ethics cop.  
When she saw numbered companies, she ordered them to stop.  
The Liberal government is deceitful as can be.  
Expect to pay, each and every day, as long as it is you, not me.  
Stumbling stump, stump, stumbling stump, stump,  
promises just for show,  
bumbling bump, bump, bumbling bump, bump,  
where did our money go?

Merry Christmas, everyone.

\* \* \*

**MONTREAL**

**Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, they have 10 years to get that song right.

Whether skating in the old port, shopping at the Atwater market, or attending a Christmas concert at Notre-Dame Basilica, Montreal is a picturesque place to spend the holidays.

*[Translation]*

Last year, Montreal added the tallest Christmas tree in Canada to its list of attractions, a tree that easily rivalled the famous Rockefeller Center Christmas tree in New York City.

*[English]*

Alas, the 88-foot tree that arrived, though undoubtedly iconic, did not quite live up to the hype. Described by some as ugly, skinny, and lopsided, images of Montreal's ugly tree quickly spread. However, like Charlie Brown and his friends, our city learned to love its ugly tree.

*[Translation]*

Montreal's ugly tree was such a hit that it is back for a second year. This year's tree curves like a smurf's hat and sits imposingly at the centre of a Christmas village called "Village du Vilain Sapin". The ugly tree is becoming a real Montreal tradition.

*[English]*

The real thing to remember about the tree and Christmas and, for that matter, this MP, is that true beauty is on the inside. I know it is early, but merry Christmas to all.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY**

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, poverty is often hidden and closer than we think. Nearly 10% of Quebec families are living in poverty, and nearly four million Canadians are food insecure. Food drives on street corners, in grocery stores, and in communities across the country are a great source of comfort to people in need. To ensure that every Canadian family has enough to eat over the holidays, we must join together and collect non-perishable food and cash donations throughout the holiday season and in the difficult months that follow. January and February are often a critical time for most food banks. I would like to thank the Complexe le Partage, the Corne d'abondance, and all other community organizations working to combat poverty. I invite all my colleagues and all Canadians to give generously to their local food drives.

Your contribution will make a difference. If you can, please give.

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**TOURISM WENDAKE**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, an institution in my riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent received national recognition last week. Tourism Wendake won the prestigious National Indigenous Cultural Tourism Award, presented by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. As everyone knows, Wendake is located in the heart of my constituency, and the Wendat people are proud, successful, and accomplished. The area has many tourism attractions, including the hotel-museum, the longhouse, the recreated village, artisans, top restaurants, the Saint-Charles River, and the Kabir Kouba falls. I could go on all day. That is why thousands of tourists visit Quebec City and come to Wendake. We all gain by promoting the cultural treasures found in all of our communities.

Congratulations to first nations and to Tourism Wendake on this well-earned national award.

\* \* \*

●(1110)

[English]

**CHILD POVERTY**

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the child poverty rate in Toronto is among the highest in the country. To put this in perspective, there are more poor kids living in my city than constituents in any MP's riding. Tonight, half the people who will go to sleep in a Toronto emergency shelter will be children. This number does not include youth in care or young offenders in custody because, effectively, those people are also homeless.

We have delivered our country's first-ever national housing strategy. It will be the largest and longest investment in housing in this country's history. However, we cannot end homelessness if we do not focus on young people and tackle youth homelessness. We must and we will.

Indigenous youth, racialized youngsters, queer kids, foster kids, and young adults with disabilities are strong and resilient. However,

our systems are breaking these children and projecting them into homelessness and onto the streets.

I ask all of Parliament, and Canadians everywhere, to build a better future for these children by building housing now. Let us give them a safe and secure place to call home. It starts with housing. It has to happen sooner than later.

\* \* \*

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to spotlight a few organizations in my riding of the Bay of Quinte that serve our community with very special holiday programs.

To date, the Gleaner's Foodbank and Christmas sharing program has helped over 1,300 families enjoy nutritious and tasty food with a holiday basket; the Salvation Army's coats for folks program gave out more than 760 clothing items for winter; the Trenton VON Christmas for seniors program connected volunteers with seniors who needed assistance with holiday shopping or preparations; and toy drives by Belleville's Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Kinsmen Club of Quinte West helped over 700 families provide holiday gifts for their children.

I remind my hon. colleagues and all Canadians that the needs of our most vulnerable community members do not disappear when the holiday season ends, and ask that we remain generous all year long. Whether it is food, funds, or the volunteering of time, our donations, no matter how small, can make all the difference.

I wish everyone a happy holiday.

\* \* \*

**NORWAY**

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada and Norway are celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations, which began in 1942 at the height of the struggle against fascist tyranny in World War II.

After the war, Canada and Norway continued building on their bilateral relationship. As new threats to international peace and stability emerged, Canada and Norway would once again stand shoulder to shoulder as strong partners under the NATO alliance. As NATO allies and multilateral partners, we enjoy co-operation on regional and global security issues. We are like-minded on issues, such as arms control and disarmament, war-affected children, gender equality, human rights, and defending the fundamental rights and freedoms that the free peoples of our two nations cherish. We also share a special bond over the protection and preservation of the Arctic.

There is lots of Norway in Canada. Nearly a half million Canadians draw their heritage from the Land of the Midnight Sun. There are 73 Norwegian and Norwegian-affiliated companies operating in Canada, employing thousands.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking our Norwegian friends and allies.

*Oral Questions***COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the inspirational volunteers I have met in my riding of Kanata—Carleton this year.

I am sure I speak for everyone when I say that our work would be impossible without the hard work of volunteers. I want to thank the countless volunteers from across the region who came out to the riding during the floods in Constance Bay and West Carleton. They carried sandbags, cooked food, and helped their neighbours in need. I thank the volunteers at the Kanata Food Cupboard and the West Carleton Food Access Centre, who are making sure that everyone has a Christmas meal this holiday season. These amazing volunteers have brought our communities closer together, inspiring neighbours to help neighbours, in the true holiday spirit of selflessness and compassion.

I would like to say this to all the volunteers in Kanata—Carleton, and indeed across the country, “Thank you. Keep up the wonderful work, and may your holidays be filled with much joy, peace, and love.”

\* \* \*

● (1115)

[Translation]

**ANDRÉ H. GAGNON**

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, my riding lost one of its brightest stars. André H. Gagnon was a businessman and kind-hearted philanthropist who left a powerful mark on the community.

In addition to successfully running several RONA hardware stores, André H. Gagnon also chaired RONA's board of directors.

André Gagnon had a deep and abiding love for Saint-Hyacinthe, and he showed that love by supporting some 250 causes every year. Whenever he felt the need, he would share his wisdom publicly to enlighten our community on various issues. The actions and stances he took were always rooted in the values of love, family, friendship, determination, justice, sharing, and hard work. He was, and always will be, a great inspiration to us all.

The entire community has come together to honour the memory of this great Maskoutain citizen.

\* \* \*

[English]

**MEMORIAL CUP**

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week, the Memorial Cup was on Parliament Hill. It has been 17 years since the Barrie Colts were finalists, and its loyal fan base is hopeful the Colts will be back this year in Regina for the 100th anniversary of the Cup. I will, however, admit to being somewhat conflicted, because my son plays for the member for Oshawa's team, the Generals, so I cheer mightily for both teams.

My second annual family skate at the home of the Colts, the Barrie Molson Centre, takes place on Saturday, December 23, from

2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission is free, and again this year, I am asking skaters to think of those less fortunate in our community and bring along non-perishable food items to support local food banks. It will be a great afternoon to lace up the skates, enjoy a cup of hot chocolate, while having fun helping others in our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish my colleagues in the House and all of the residents of Barrie—Innisfil a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2018.

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**BEN SYLLIBOY**

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, flags have flown at half-mast this week in Mi'kmaq communities across Atlantic Canada, with the passing of Grand Chief Ben Sylliboy.

The Grand Chief was first appointed to represent his community as Keptin to the Grand Council in 1968. He went on to serve as Grand Council Chief for 26 years. He served on a multitude of local, regional, and national boards that promoted the Mi'kmaq language and the traditional knowledge of his people.

A residential school survivor, his contribution to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was both profound and inspiring. One of his greatest accomplishments was leading the charge to establish Mawita'mk, a home for adults in his community with intellectual disabilities.

Chief Rod Googoo of Waycobah said, “He was not only a credit to our race but a credit to the human race.”

To his wife, Marie and daughters, Michelle and Christina, our heartfelt sympathies. Know that Ben's wisdom, his guidance and his faith will live with us for years to come.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, five months ago, the finance minister told local businesses he would impose a reasonableness test to determine what they were allowed to pay to contributing family members as part of the business.

Now, three weeks before that so-called reasonableness test will take effect, nobody has any idea what it means. There is no written legislation, there are no written rules, but businesses are now scrambling right before the Christmas break to determine what the laws will be.

How is that reasonable?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member that the details will be known very shortly.

*Oral Questions*

I also want to highlight what the finance minister has also announced, which is a reduction in the small business tax rate from 10.5% to 9%. This will represent, on average, \$1,600 per small business in Canada and up to a maximum of \$7,500 that they can invest in innovation and hiring workers. That is because we believe in the importance of small businesses across the country to contribute to Canada's prosperity. We are very proud of our small businesses.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the small business tax rate was already set for 9% when the finance minister took office. He then raised it back up to 10.5%. We are happy that due to the unrelenting pressure of the official opposition, he has backed down from that.

Now small businesses are expected to have faith in the government's idea of "reasonable". Reasonable to it is raising taxes on people with diabetes, on waitresses enjoying a small sandwich during their break, on autistic people, on farmers, and on small businesses.

How can the government expect small businesses to have faith that the government will be reasonable in its treatment of family compensation?

• (1120)

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite the contrary. We lowered taxes for small businesses, from 11% to 10.5%, and now to 9% by 2019. Because we recognize the importance of small businesses in Canada, we will always be behind our entrepreneurs. What is reasonable is to have made the investments in infrastructure, to go forward with the Canada child benefit that has contributed to more growth in the country in the last three years than the Conservatives could ever achieve in 10 years. That is good for small businesses.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister appears unable to stand and answer basic questions about a plan that he will impose in just three weeks. It is not just that the finance minister owned shares in a company he regulated, or introduced a pension bill while having ownership in a pension company, or sold shares just a week before market-moving tax measures, all those things were ethical lapses and failures. However, because he is up to his eyeballs in these troubles, he is unable to do his job, which is to answer questions and tell people what the rules will be.

If he cannot do the work of a finance minister, why will he not step aside and let someone else do it for him?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** "Mr. Speaker, I recognize this is Friday and the member for Carleton is sometimes a bit careless with facts.

When we talk about the measures announced on December 7, it was not deemed market moving. Let me remind members, and Canadians listening, that the measures we introduced on December 7, 2015, was to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% and lower them for nine million Canadians. For the people at home watching this, for middle-class Canadians it is \$670,000-plus per year, on average. For a couple it is \$1,340 more in its pockets. We recognize that a prosperous and successful middle class is good for Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after question period, during tabling of documents, we will have the opportunity to verify the claims of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

At this time, entrepreneurs know that new tax measures will be imposed on January 1. That means that they have less than three weeks to adapt to these measures. Every day that goes by means that entrepreneurs and job creators have one less day to prepare.

Can the government at least tell us that the new measures will be presented next week at the latest so that we can finally debate them here in the House?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that the measures will soon be presented, along with the details on how they will affect income sprinkling. Canadians and entrepreneurs will find out about these measures very soon.

I would also like to remind my colleague that the objective of the income-sprinkling measure is to create more tax fairness in our system. We think that it is unfair that individuals in Canada can incorporate and save \$48,000 a year, the equivalent of the average salary in this country. In our view, that is unfair and the rules need to be more fair and equitable for all Canadians.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Every day that goes by means that entrepreneurs have one less day to prepare for these new measures. I hope that the measures will be introduced next week at the latest so we can debate them here in the House.

Canadians are right to be pleased. We remember the sad day, July 18, when the government announced draft legislation that could have resulted in tax increases of up to 73%. This bad government would also have made business people pay much more if they wanted to sell their companies to their children.

Will the government pledge to introduce the new measures as quickly as possible, at least next week, so that our entrepreneurs can adequately prepare?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, we pledge to do that. The details will be made available very soon.

We will ensure that all entrepreneurs have the information they need to make informed decisions. We do not want to impact family businesses. We will always support the family business model. Our objective is to make our tax system a little fairer.

*Oral Questions*

When the member talks about a bad government, it is important to remember that this government has created 600,000 jobs in the past two years in the Canadian economy, a growth rate—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** No, it was the Canadian economy.

**Mr. Joël Lightbound:** Yes, but it was the government that created the conditions for this prosperity, for this growth, which is the envy of every country, and the Conservatives were never able to achieve that in 10 years.

\* \* \*

• (1125)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to fix the problems in the Conservatives' anti-terrorism bill, which was an unprecedented attack on Canadians' civil rights.

The Privacy Commissioner sounded the alarm on the Liberals' Bill C-59 yesterday in committee. The thresholds for sharing information about Canadians among departments are still too low and must be more limited.

Will the government finally agree to amend its bill to protect Canadians' civil rights?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Privacy Commissioner said that Canada was moving from the back of the pack and catching up with the rest of the international community. In fact, he said that Canada was moving to the lead as a result of the legislation, Bill C-59.

The fact is that the legislation is putting us at the vanguard, that we are ensuring two things equally: one, the protection of Canadians; and two, making sure that their rights are protected.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are claiming it is not possible to repeal the Conservative Bill C-51. My colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke is proposing just that with his Bill C-303 to fully protect Canadians' rights.

Under the 138-page Liberal Bill C-59, CSIS still has extensive and invasive powers. The privacy of Canadians is still under threat and oversight of government agencies is insufficient.

Will the government divide Bill C-59 into separate bills so they can be properly studied? Canadians' rights are at stake.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-59 was preceded by the most exhaustive public consultation across Canada ever on national security. There was an opportunity by the public safety and national security committee to ensure there was a review of the security framework. That led to the legislation before us today, which would see finally the oversight that was talked about for so many years, including when I was the critic in opposition and pushing for it.

We have waited for over a decade. It is time to move forward with appropriate oversight.

**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the finance ministers will be meeting this weekend, and we are worried the federal finance minister might once again impose his own vision. He failed to consult with the provinces before announcing his plan for the taxation of cannabis. He did the same for health transfers. Now concerns are being raised that the Liberals will change equalization payments without consulting the provinces first.

What is wrong with the government? The Liberals must work with the provinces instead of simply imposing changes. When will the government honour its commitment to true partnership with the provinces?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** To the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we value the work we do with the provinces. We look forward to the discussions that will happen next week with the finance ministers of all provinces, as we continue to collaborate with all provinces and territories to make sure our economy is successful and thriving.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that after the Liberals forced their visions for housing and health care on the provinces, they are now planning to change the equalization calculations, without even consulting the provinces. Is that what they call a partnership?

The finance ministers are meeting this weekend.

Will the government finally start to treat the provinces and municipalities as partners instead of subordinates?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have always treated the provinces as partners, and we will continue to do so.

We look forward to discussions between the federal minister and his provincial counterparts. We want to work together with the provinces and territories to keep Canada's economy thriving from coast to coast to coast.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are over 2,000 small businesses in my riding. Most of them are run by people with families and many of them live hand-to-mouth, depending on the vagaries of the federal tax system.

The Minister of Finance has said that he is changing the rules on January 1, but he refuses to provide any details. Just how does the minister think that giving these people less than 24 days to do their tax planning is fair, especially at Christmas?



*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to highlight that our government has always been behind small businesses. We have lowered the small business tax rate from 10.5% to 9% by 2019. We believe that it is important to stimulate growth.

With regard to the question from the member opposite, the details will come very shortly. Our goal here has always been to bring more fairness to our tax system while supporting the family business model in Canada.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would say that the Liberals are acting like Scrooges, except that Scrooge saved money and that is a foreign concept for this Liberal government. They seem to think it is fair to spend \$2.2 million paying actors for their talent, but when it comes to small business owners, the Liberals do not think it is fair to tell them how the tax changes are going to affect them.

In the spirit of Christmas, will the minister tell them what to expect so that they can plan for the new year?

• (1130)

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned time and time again, the details will come very shortly. What is a foreign concept to the opposition is probably the concept of tax fairness, in and of itself.

Growing this economy, as well, has been a foreign concept to them. They have had the lowest growth since the Second World War, they have had high unemployment, and we have reduced the unemployment levels to the lowest they have been in a decade. That is because this government understands the economy and understands what measures need to be taken to create a prosperous environment in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the past five months, small business people across the country have been waiting for the Minister of Finance's promised tax measures, which are bound to increase their taxes.

While we all joyfully celebrate Christmas and the new year, some people will be feeling somewhat less celebratory about these tax hikes.

Will the government share the details of the tax hike with Canada's entrepreneurs before the new year?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, why is the Liberal government not answering our questions? What kind of game is it playing?

The Minister of Finance is once again tormenting small businesses by refusing to tell them what is about to hit them 23 days from now. He himself might not have a plan, and it might take him two years to understand and comply with the Ethics Commissioner's directives, but small business owners need a plan. That is a pretty basic concept in business. It is one minute to midnight.

Will the government show some respect for Canadian entrepreneurs and let them in on the new tax rules today?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, details about income sprinkling will be released very shortly. We have listened to entrepreneurs and Canadians from coast to coast to make sure the changes we introduce to improve tax fairness, which might be a foreign concept to the opposition, are done properly and will not have unintended consequences.

We support businesses and business people. We know how important they are. I would like to remind entrepreneurs in his riding and mine that that is why we are cutting the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019. That means an average savings of \$1,600 for Canada's small businesses. Some will save as much as \$7,500. That is money they can use to innovate and hire people.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, I met Keith who owns three restaurants and employs 90 people. I met him while he was working a double shift just to make his payroll. He is working seven days a week just to survive. The government continues to make it harder for his restaurant to be successful, but it gets worse. He does not even know what changes he will face on January 1.

Is this Minister of Finance so preoccupied with his many ethical messes that he does not have the time to do his job?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to remind the member and entrepreneurs across the country that we stand behind them. That is why we have decided to lower the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019. For the employees in those businesses, we have increased the working income tax benefit by 65%, which will represent more money in their pockets while reducing taxes for the middle class. That is more money in the pockets of Canadians from the middle class.

What we are trying to achieve is to have a successful middle class and a successful small business ecosystem, so that we create growth in this country.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on January 1, there will be major changes to the way small businesses are taxed.

The new small business tax changes will have a significant impact on the people I represent. To make matter worse, the Liberals have yet to release their tax plan. This leads Canadians to wonder if the finance minister is too preoccupied with his ethical fiascos to do his job.

Why has the finance minister failed to tell us the details of his plan?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the details will be coming very shortly, in advance of the January 1 implementation date.

The finance minister has been preoccupied for the last three years with growing this economy. He has managed to create the conditions for Canada's economy to grow at 3.7% in the last year. That is the top of the G7. He has managed to reach the lowest unemployment we have seen in a decade. That is something.

*Oral Questions*

I can understand the opposition's envy, and why they want to keep playing politics. On this side, we are working for Canadians and for Canada's money.

\* \* \*

● (1135)

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan last weekend, the advance polls for the by-election in Battlefords—Lloydminster were taking place, yet there were no advance polls in any indigenous community. Indigenous people who wanted to vote needed to travel, in the middle of winter, up to 45 minutes, to get to an advanced poll. This is unacceptable.

How can we encourage better election participation from indigenous people if we do not have advance polls anywhere near indigenous communities? How is this part of a nation-to-nation relationship?

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no relationship more important to this government than the relationship with our indigenous peoples.

The ability to vote is fundamental to all Canadians, all Canadian citizens, including indigenous peoples. We will look into the matter and look forward to working with all parliamentarians to address it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary session is coming to an end, just like many people's EI sickness benefits. More than a third of recipients will need far more than the 15 weeks set out by the program. How can we remain indifferent to this situation?

The Prime Minister himself promised to review the system. Halfway through his mandate, the situation has yet to change. These people cannot wait any longer.

When will the government finally review the EI sickness benefits system?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government—and I thank my colleague for letting me say so—that understands just how fundamental the employment insurance program is, not only to make it easier for people to find a new job, but also to take care of families who are going through difficult times.

We have been working very hard over the past two years to make a number of benefits more flexible and more generous. We will continue to work hard with our partners to keep on doing so.

\* \* \*

[English]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of Canadians suffering daily from Lyme disease.

The minister goes on about the three-pillar plan. She talks about the surveillance, the education, and best practices, but nothing is being done for those suffering today. The response has been weak and disappointing.

The Liberal government's plan is known to be incomplete and grossly underfunded. It budgeted a mere \$4 million for research. Why are the Liberals spending more on a temporary rink outside than they spend for Lyme disease sufferers?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the impact of Lyme disease on families and on Canadians.

We have tabled the federal framework on Lyme disease in Canada, which clearly lays out the federal government's role in addressing Lyme disease in Canada. Our government also invested \$4 million to establish the Lyme disease research network.

This network will work to generate new evidence and data about Lyme disease, and ultimately will improve diagnosis and treatment.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue claims the disability tax credit rules have not changed for Canadians with type 1 diabetes, but that is not true.

An internal CRA memo from May 2 directs staff to reject all those claims, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

In Lakeland, Alice, a small business owner, and her son, both type 1 diabetics, have received that credit for many years. This spring, the CRA rejected her claim.

Will the minister stop this cold-hearted attack on vulnerable Canadians, and reverse this cruel decision?

**Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a registered nurse, I have personally seen the impact that diabetes can have on the lives of individuals and their families. I am happy to say that a member of Diabetes Canada is part of the disability advisory committee announced today. This committee will improve the agency's administration of benefits and credits for Canadians with disabilities.

The agency will review all applications for disability tax credit under the life-sustaining therapy that was proposed with the revised clarification letter. Our position has been absolutely clear. Everyone who is eligible for this credit must have access to it.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS***[Translation]*

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, whenever a simple question comes her way, the Minister of National Revenue could just answer with, “This is a recorded message”.

For weeks, she has been saying that the eligibility criteria for people with type 1 diabetes have not changed, but a memo from May 2 says the exact opposite. For her to mislead the House and Canadians is unacceptable.

When will the minister finally do the right thing and reverse her decision?

• (1140)

*[English]*

**Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a registered nurse, I personally know the difficulties that face Canadians living with disabilities and their families. I want to assure all Canadians who benefit from the DTC that the eligibility criteria for this credit has not changed. We are always open to hearing the concerns of Canadians. That is why we have re-established the disability advisory committee that was gutted by the previous government. Our priority has always been clear. It is to continue to focus on the most vulnerable in our country.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear from constituents with type 1 diabetes who are suddenly being denied the disability tax credit. They are worried about a Liberal policy change they were not told about and do not understand. However, the revenue minister continues to say that nothing has changed.

It is obvious who is telling the truth as a May 2 memo proves that the eligibility criteria changed. Clearly, the minister is intentionally misleading Canadians. When will she admit she made a decision to raise taxes on type 1 diabetics?

**Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me assure my colleague and all Canadians that we are committed to ensuring that Canadians receive the benefits to which they are entitled. We have put in place measures to make the disability tax credit more accessible than ever before. We have simplified the DTC forms. We have added nurse practitioners to certify their patients' applications. Today, we also announced the membership of the disability advisory committee, which will improve accessibility of this credit for the most vulnerable in our country.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would note the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore in her question commented and used the phrase “deliberately misleading”. Members will be reminded that it is a phrase that members should avoid. Notes of misleading and so on have been considered parliamentary, but when “deliberate” is put into the equation, that does cross a line and becomes unparliamentary. I urge caution in respect of that kind of phraseology.

The hon. member for Essex.

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for many years, people in Windsor and Essex have endured a persistent, low frequency vibration coming from the U.S., known as the hum. Over the last few weeks, people have reported the hum to be louder, shaking homes, affecting sleep, and creating earaches and headaches. The Liberals promised to work on this issue, but despite several attempts for information, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has yet to answer.

The hum continues to negatively affect the health of my constituents in Essex and people in Windsor. They deserve answers. What actions are the Liberals taking to address this issue and why do they think it is okay for people to keep waiting?

**Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is well aware of the seriousness of the complaints from residents in the city of Windsor, where I was a couple of weeks ago with my distinguished colleagues and, of course, the resulting pain caused by the noise. We understand their concern. Our officials have consistently raised the issue with their American counterparts. We will continue to engage and work to find a solution.

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**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the U.S. International Trade Commission once again targeted the Canadian forest industry, a decision that the B.C. Lumber Trade Council has called “completely without merit”. The U.S. lumber industry is enjoying record profits and Canadian imports are at a lower level today than they were when deemed non-injurious by the ITC in the last round of litigation.

What is the government doing today to support Canadian producers in their appeal of this latest American decision and when can we expect to see a long-term resolution to this ongoing battle?

**Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said throughout this dispute, punitive U.S. countervailing and anti-dumping duties on Canadian softwood lumber are disturbing, troubling, and unjust. In recent weeks, we have put legal challenges against U.S. duties on Canadian softwood under both NAFTA and the World Trade Organization rules. Our lawyers are hard at work. Our forest industry has succeeded in every previous dispute and we will continue to fiercely defend our softwood lumber industry and its fantastic workers.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has set a goal of growing our agricultural exports to \$75 billion by 2025.

The agreement between Europe and Canada will contribute to that goal by boosting exports by up to \$1.5 billion annually.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House about the measures our government has taken to help farmers, ranchers, and producers capitalize on this agreement and leverage export opportunities?

● (1145)

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for the great work he does on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The minister headed a trade mission to Europe, where he attended the world's largest food trade show, met with official representatives, and helped open doors for our beef and pork producers. The trade links that the Canadian industry has developed with Europe should increase sales by over \$300 million over the next year.

We are committed to putting more money in our farmers' pockets and ensuring that they have access to the best opportunities around the world.

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[English]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wrapped up his second visit to Asia in two months, and once again he comes home having embarrassed Canada on the trade file. He says around the world that he will only sign trade deals with his so-called progressive agenda. Then, quietly, in the U.S., they tell our NAFTA partners that all of those progressive priorities will be non-binding.

Today I am going to ask the parliamentary secretary to put aside the sheet that the PMO provided him, and confirm to us today that when he and others are in the U.S., they are telling NAFTA stakeholders that the progressive agenda will all be non-binding.

**Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his efforts.

Since the NAFTA renegotiations began, the Conservative Party has simply been asking the minister to take our federation's core priorities seriously. In response, she and her parliamentary secretary attack us every time we ask trade-related questions, even though we are the party of free trade.

I appeal to the minister to please answer my question. Now that we know for sure that an agreement will not be reached before 2018, can she at least assure us that she will do everything in her power to save NAFTA, since we are at that point?

**Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our position is clear. We will defend and maintain the elements of NAFTA that are key to our national interests.

We are negotiating in good faith, and we expect our partners to do the same. However, we cannot and will not accept proposals that put Canadian jobs at risk and do harm to our economy. We will always defend Canada's national interests and stand up for our values. We want a good deal, not just any deal.

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[English]

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since day one, we have been challenging the government to make securing a new softwood agreement its number one trade priority. It was no surprise to the rest of us that yesterday's U.S. ruling seems to have caught the Liberal government off guard.

Softwood lumber is now being held ransom by an increasing protectionist U.S. administration. Hard-working forestry families and their livelihoods are being held ransom. With only weeks to go before Christmas, what is the minister planning to do and prepared to do for Canadian families?

**Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government stands firmly behind the Canadian forest industry, which supports hundreds of thousands of good jobs across the country. Through our softwood lumber action plan, we are investing \$867 million to support workers and communities affected by these unjustified duties: to diversify markets, to create access to international markets, and provide financial services on commercial terms.

We will vigorously defend Canada's lumber industry, including through litigation, as we are doing. We are not looking for any deal for Canada; we are looking for a good deal.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, whether in Saint-André, New Brunswick, or in Calgary, where I met with grain producers, everyone is wondering who in this government is standing up for agriculture.

Farmers were called tax cheats, family transfers were compromised, deferred cash tickets were almost taken away, and the government refused to split Bill C-59 on grain transportation. The list is long.

Worst of all, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has not been involved in any of the free trade negotiations. Agriculture is the basis of our economy.

Why are the Liberals abandoning farmers?

**Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is a strong proponent of supply management. Our party fought to implement supply management and we will continue to defend it. We will also defend all the interests of all producers and of Canadian agriculture as a whole in the negotiations.

\* \* \*

• (1150)

[English]

#### CANADA POST

**Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a year ago, the government operations committee tabled an all-party report calling on Canada Post to restore door-to-door delivery. Last week, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement promised that she would finally respond to the report before the House rises, but her director of communications backtracked yesterday, saying that the minister would respond in due time.

Will the minister clarify to Canadians whether she will respond before the House adjourns, or will she break yet another promise?

[Translation]

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

[English]

Canada Post, of course, is a valued Canadian institution, especially at this time of year.

Our government delivered on its promise to suspend the Harper plan to dismantle home delivery. Currently our government is studying the report of my hon. friend's committee, as well as the task force. We will be reporting, as indicated, by the end of the year.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 70% of the children at the early childhood centre at the Guy-Favreau complex are the children of federal public servants, but the government now wants the centre to pay market value rent.

Quebec will do its share to help, but the federal government is breaking its promise and is offering only \$50,000 a year, or half of what the centre needs.

Will the government rethink its priorities and provide an adequate subsidy to help maintain an essential service for children and families?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, early childhood education services are key to our economy, but also to our society. Our children are our most precious resource.

Over the past few years, we announced historic investments in partnership with the municipalities, provinces, and territories to

#### Oral Questions

ensure that our communities, and especially our families and children, can benefit from the Canadian government's support not only now, but in the long term.

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#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in June 2016, the UN adopted a resolution to bring ISIS fighters before the court on charges of genocide.

In addition, Canada welcomed 25,000 Syrian refugees to protect them from these murderous fanatics. We have been clear that ISIS is an enemy of Canada, and it will forever be impossible to engage with these murderers. It is a matter of ideology, not money.

Will the minister take a firm stance and incarcerate the ISIS fighters returning to Canada?

[English]

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course, we, and all members of this House, condemn the actions of ISIS and will pursue criminal charges against any individual who is found to commit terrorist acts. I would say that of those individuals who have returned, we have two active cases where we are seeking to go after individuals with evidence.

I would note that in the 10 years under the Conservatives, the number of cases pursued: zero.

The reality is, the record shows something different.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety has said that returning ISIS terrorists are unlikely to ever be de-radicalized, and yet millions are being spent on these programs. How could anyone think that this is a good plan?

The government knows that hundreds of ISIS terrorists are returning after committing their atrocities like nothing ever happened. Canadians know that this is completely unacceptable.

Will the minister commit to protect Canadians by prosecuting these terrorists?

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, let me be clear. Yes, of course we will go after any individual who has committed a terrorist act. However, I would hope that the member opposite would join me in saying that there are acts of terror that have not been committed, that there are people beginning to walk a dark path who we do not want to go down that path, and that prevention, which the previous government unfortunately did not invest in, and dealing with de-radicalization, are huge priorities to keeping our country safe. It is why we are making it a major priority, along with going after those who have already done us harm.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, they burn people alive in cages. They kill gays by throwing them off buildings. They kidnap and rape children. Now these terrorists are returning to Canada after fighting against us overseas. Instead of arresting them, the Liberals want to reintegrate them into our society. To do that, and I am not making this up, the Liberals plan to employ methods such as poetry and podcasts.

When will Liberals take the public safety of Canadians seriously?  
• (1155)

**Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government is doing exactly what the Conservative government did not do; we are investing in the services that keep this country safe.

Need I remind the member opposite of the cuts that the Harper government implemented to the very services that keep this country safe: \$530 million from the RCMP; \$390 million from the Canada Border Services Agency; \$69 million from CSIS; \$42 million from the Communications Security Establishment; and \$171 million from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

We invest, while they cut.

\* \* \*

**SCIENCE**

**Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a promise to strengthen science in Canada, after suffering neglect under the previous Conservative government.

As part of this renewed commitment, the Minister of Science commissioned a report on the state of fundamental science in Canada. The report highlighted the need for increased equity and diversity, and more opportunities for young researchers in our research ecosystem.

Could the Minister of Science speak to the importance of diversity, and how we are creating new opportunities for young researchers across the country?

**Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for King—Vaughan for her excellent work.

Our government understands that diversity and research excellence go hand in hand. By increasing diversity, we bring different experiences, ideas, and perspectives to advance Canadian science, grow the economy, and improve the lives of Canadians.

That is why I am acting on the recommendations of the fundamental science review and the evaluation of the Canada research chairs program, by limiting tier 1 renewals. This change will create new opportunities for our researchers.

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**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the bring Widlene home campaign has captured the hearts and attention of people from all across Canada.

Still, today the Earle family live in danger, despite numerous empty promises to help from the Prime Minister. Now they are being told that the only way that the Prime Minister will help them is if they obtain an adoption order from Haiti, which would require them leaving Widlene in a state-run orphanage for up to three years. The Minister of Immigration has everything he needs to grant a temporary resident permit and bring Widlene to safety.

As we approach Christmas, I am asking the Prime Minister to give this family some hope and commit to helping bring Widlene home.

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government understands that immigration cases can have a profound impact on all individuals' lives.

An inter-country adoption is often a long and complex process, and we understand the challenges that are faced by families. The minister is aware of this case. His office has been in touch with the family in order to assist them with this legal process.

We are bound, as a country, by international and domestic laws on adoption, and, as such, there are strict rules in place and criteria that must be met before a child can be legally removed from one country to another.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canada is thriving on international trade. Our economy depends more than ever on the opening of new markets. Last September, our producers and fishers got to explore a whole new opportunity in Europe, with CETA.

Last month, I had a chance to talk with fishers of the Victoria Co-op Fisheries from northern Cape Breton, who are telling me that business is booming.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade share with the House how CETA has helped to shape the future of Atlantic provinces?

**Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Sydney—Victoria for all of his hard work and leadership on the international trade committee.

When CETA came into force last September, an incredible opportunity opened up for Atlantic provinces to develop new markets and grow their businesses. Atlantic Canadians now have tariff-free access to the lucrative European market for their high-quality, world-renowned seafood products. Five hundred million customers are looking forward to experiencing a taste of Atlantic Canada.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has set a new record for appointment backlogs.

Stuck in the staggering pile of 594 vacant or expired appointments are 12 of the 15 seats on the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's board. Similarly, 80% of the seats on the NSERC board are also vacant.

Could the minister please tell us when these vacancies will be filled?

• (1200)

**Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me welcome my colleague to his new role.

Our government has put in place a new appointment process which supports open, transparent, and merit-based selection processes. It was this process that was used to appoint Canada's new chief science advisor, about which our colleague from Beauce said, "I read your biography and I believe, like all my colleagues do, that you're an excellent choice."

The member opposite can expect that the same rigorous process can be followed to ensure that all board appointees are qualified and reflect Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### FEDERAL PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday and Tuesday, finance ministers will be meeting to negotiate the sharing of the cannabis tax. As members know, Quebec and the municipalities will be responsible for 100% of the costs. They should therefore receive 100% of the tax.

However, out of the blue, in Bill C-63, the government, here in Ottawa, quietly decided to keep all of the tax and then transfer a portion of it as it sees fit.

Does the government agree that the tax sharing arrangement should reflect the cost sharing tax revenues should be shared in accordance with how costs are shared, meaning 100% to Quebec and 0% to Ottawa?

[English]

**Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government released a discussion document after discussions with the first ministers of all of the provinces and territories, as well as the finance ministers of those jurisdictions. That discussion document has garnered input from municipalities, stakeholders, and industry from across the country. That feedback will inform discussions that are scheduled to take place this weekend between the finance ministers of all of the provinces and territories to resolve this important issue. I want to assure the member that the interests of all who have cause in making the system work are under consideration in those discussions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, who knows culture? Quebec artists, artisans, and producers know culture, as do the Quebecers who consume it. All of these people are

#### Oral Questions

opposed to the Minister of Canadian Heritage giving web giants special treatment with her damn Netflix deal.

Unions, the government, the business community, everyone is sick of hearing the Minister of Canadian Heritage spew the federal government's empty rhetoric in Quebec when she should be defending our culture in Ottawa.

When she meets with the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal today, rather than using Newspeak, will the minister stop being so condescending and finally listen to those who know our culture?

**Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have always been clear in this regard. That being said, we have presented a cultural policy, with investments in culture.

Quebeckers and Canadians are concerned about the impact of American content on our culture. That is why we made massive investments of over \$2.3 billion in arts and culture, more than any other country in the G7.

Unlike the previous government, we understand the value of the cultural sector, which represents 630,000 jobs and generates \$50 billion for our economy.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** I have a sad story for you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, 281 people lost their jobs at the Davie shipyard. Merry Christmas Quebec. What a nice gift from the federal government.

Almost 400 families are now unemployed because the government refuses to give better contracts to the best shipyard in North America. We need contracts right now, not in two weeks.

This week we learned that five ministers are working behind the scenes to help the project move forward. Who, then, could be standing in the way?

Is it senior officials?

Is it the Minister of Finance?

Is it the Treasury Board?

Who is blocking the deal?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are obviously very concerned, and we lament job losses in Quebec and everywhere else. It is this government that is trying to provide the Davie shipyard with opportunities in the short, medium and long terms through our national shipbuilding strategy.

We are convinced that there will be other opportunities for the Davie shipyard. We really want to assure the people of Quebec that this has captured the government's attention and that we are working on it.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1205)

[English]

**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.):** *Qujannamiik Uqaqti*, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs.

The “What we heard” report on the nutrition north program was released eight months ago. Since that time, I have asked the minister on numerous occasions when Nunavummiut can expect the much-needed culturally relevant changes to the program. When I asked the same question on May 5, the response was that the launch of the new program would be “very soon”. My constituents are growing impatient.

My question again is, when can Nunavummiut expect these much-needed changes?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, *nakurmiik* to the member.

It is completely unacceptable that many northerners are still struggling to feed their families. As members know, our government already expanded nutrition north to support 37 additional communities. However, we know that much more needs to be done. We are considering all of the feedback received during the recent engagement and are collaborating with northern indigenous organizations to overhaul the program to be more reflective of northerners' needs and to work together on accessibility to country food. Together, we can ensure that northern families have access to affordable, healthy food.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Tore Vamraak, State Secretary for the Ministry of Finance for the Kingdom of Norway.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[Translation]

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

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, during question period, we talked a lot about corporate taxes. In order to set the record straight for Canadians, I ask for the consent of the House to table the budget introduced by the Minister of Finance on March 22, 2016. The seventh paragraph on page 220 of that document reads:

[English]

Budget 2016 proposes that further reductions in the small business income tax rate be deferred.

[Translation]

Can we table that budget here in the House?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[English]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order arising out of question period relating to a response by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. I was quite startled by his claim that in the 10 years of the Conservative government, zero cases were pursued in response to acts of terrorism. That is what he cited to this House. What is startling about it is that as a Toronto area member, he seems to forget the Toronto 18 case that was not only pursued, but also prosecuted.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I accept that the hon. member is attempting to raise a point of order. The nature of his intervention really seems to be a point of debate as to the facts that were presented in the House this afternoon. He may wish to take that up under other parts of the rubric that permit him to do so here in the House of Commons.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled “Certificate of Nomination of Raymond Théberge to the Position of Commissioner of Official Languages”.

[English]

## FINANCE

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Finance entitled, “Driving Inclusive Growth: Spurring Productivity And Competitiveness In Canada”.

I want to especially thank committee members of all parties for their long hours and diligent work, and the public for their input, with over 400 submissions made and over 300 witnesses appearing. Finally, I want to thank the clerk of the committee, Suzie Cadieux; the analysts, Brett Capstick and Andrew Barton; and the research assistants, Shaowei Pu and Stephanie Stark.

I am hopeful that the summary of this report, which includes some 92 recommendations, will assist the government in moving forward to assist the business community and persons in this country into becoming more competitive and productive so that we become a more prosperous society for Canadians well into the future.

● (1210)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I understand there is a dissenting report, and we will hear about that from the hon. member for Carleton.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, you are correct. There is a dissenting report.



Before I introduce its contents, I thank the chairman of the finance committee for presiding over a very well-executed study. Even though the conversations were interesting and much information was produced, the final report by the majority was, in our view, flawed.

As a result, we introduce a dissenting report. In it, we call on the government to cancel any and all tax increases, including, but not limited to, those imposed on diabetics, autistic people, and others to whom the government has suddenly denied the disability tax credit.

I am pleased to report to the House that just today, even before we had the opportunity to formally table this dissenting report, it appears the government is relenting under pressure by the official opposition and reinstating the disability tax credit for type I diabetics. I am very pleased to learn it is backing down from this cold-hearted tax increase it had attempted to put into place back in May of this year.

We will be watching very carefully to ensure this is not yet another head fake by the government to deceive people who are suffering and are vulnerable. We will continue to hold the government to account if it tries to target other vulnerable people with tax increases.

In addition to that recommendation, our dissenting report takes the broad view that the government should emphasize free markets and free enterprise as the greatest hope to eliminate poverty and expand opportunity for everyone. That contrasts with the big government central planning that the main report proposes and the overall direction of the government, which is impose higher costs, heavier regulations, and more severe burdens on the people who pay the bills in our country.

\* \* \*

## PETITIONS

### CYCLING

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured and proud to rise today to table a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding, in their call for the establishment of a national cycling strategy.

With rising and soaring health care costs, infrastructure costs, and the need to tackle greenhouse gases, the petitioners call on the government to establish a strategy with clear targets so we can join countries like the Netherlands, Norway, France, and Germany, all of which have increased cycling and have helped create the necessary safe infrastructure so they can become cycling nations.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition respecting the troubling political situation in Cambodia, where there have been gross human rights violations and an undermining of democracy by Hun Sen's regime.

The petitioners note that Hun Sen's regime has been in violation of the Paris agreements by undermining democracy and repeatedly violating human rights. They also note that Canada is a signatory to the Paris agreement.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to exert political pressure on the Cambodian government to honour the Paris agreement and the

## Routine Proceedings

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, appeal to the signatory governments of the Paris agreement to address to the current crisis in Cambodia and the failure of the Cambodian government under Prime Minister Hun Sen to respect human rights and democracy, and to call for international support to monitor election rights, support the national election commission, and support only a free and fair process during the upcoming general elections in 2018.

• (1215)

### DRUG PLANS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, public and private drug plans often leave thousands of Manitobans, in fact many more Canadians, with little or no coverage when it comes to prescribed medications.

The petition, signed by many constituents in Winnipeg North and others, asks the Government of Canada to work with the premiers to look at ways we could possibly change the Canada Health Act and have a universal drug plan for all Canadians.

### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to table today.

The first one is from 26 petitioners, regarding Bill C-51 and religious freedoms.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the potential removal of section 176 of the Criminal Code, which they say is the only section that protects faith leaders from malicious interference with funerals, rituals, and other assemblies of any faith. They also draws the attention of the House to Bill C-305, which was passed earlier in the year, and drawing some allusions to it.

The petitioners ask the government to abandon any attempt to repeal section 176 of the Criminal Code and to stand up for the rights of all Canadians to practise their religion without fear, recrimination, violence, or discrimination.

### TAXATION

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on the proposed small business tax changes. It is signed by 65 constituents of mine.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that Canadians have not been given adequate time to be consulted and to provide feedback. They say that family businesses will suffer the most, because it is essential to their retirement plans and rewards risks inherent in starting a small business. They also say that small businesses, doctors, family farms, and others would also be unfairly penalized.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to abandon its unfair tax proposals and defend Canadian businesses as the main driver of the economy.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my third petition is on the forced disappearances of political and human rights activists in the Sindh Province in Pakistan. I want to thank two of my constituents especially, Asif Panhwar and Max Memon. There are 33 signatures on the petition.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that 160 people have gone missing since February 2017, without any information on their whereabouts. Everyone missing so far is either a political worker, a human rights activist, or journalist/writer, who has raised their voices in the cause of human rights of Sindh people. They say that over 1,200 cases of missing persons in Sindh have been reported since 2010 and most of the victims have turned up dead, with signs of having been tortured and murdered.

The petitioners ask that the Canadian government urge the Pakistani government to stop the human rights violations against the Sindh people committed by Pakistani security agencies and that aid to Pakistan should be tied to its human rights record. They say that Canadian aid dollars should not be used to support these agencies that are kidnapping, torturing, and murdering their own citizens.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 1260, 1262, 1263, 1264, 1265 and 1266.

[Text]

Question No. 1260— **Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:**

With regard to comments made by the Minister of Finance on October 19, 2017, that he has recused himself “at least twice” in order to avoid a conflict of interest: (a) how many times has the Minister recused himself in order to avoid a conflict of interest; and (b) for each instance in (a), (i) what was the topic or item, (ii) on what date did the Minister become aware that the item could cause a conflict of interest, (iii) on what date did the Minister recuse himself, (iv) on what date did the Minister report his recusal to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is an independent officer of the House of Commons who administers the Conflict of Interest Act and the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is responsible for helping appointed and elected officials prevent and avoid conflicts between their public duties and private interests.

As per her recommendations, the conflict of interest screen is administered by the minister’s chief of staff and supported by the department. Instances that are caught by the conflict of interest screen are reported to the Ethics Commissioner’s office.

Minister Morneau continues to work closely with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure all the rules are being followed, and has gone above and beyond her recommendations.

Question No. 1262— **Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:**

With regard to the announcement made by the Minister of Finance in Hampton, New Brunswick, on October 18, 2017: why was the Member of Parliament for Saint John—Rothsay not invited to attend the announcement?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance is unable to respond as it does not manage the Minister of Finance’s invitations to parliamentarians.

Question No. 1263— **Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Assembly of First Nations v. Attorney General of Canada (representing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), Canadian Human Rights Tribunal File No. T134017008: what are the total legal costs incurred by the government in this matter since January 25, 2016?

**Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the information that has been requested is protected by solicitor-client privilege, the federal crown asserts that privilege and, in this case, has waived that privilege only to the extent of revealing the total legal costs. Justice lawyers, notaries, and paralegals are salaried public servants and therefore no external legal costs were incurred. Based upon the hours recorded, client departments are charged an internal government rate. In this case, the calculation amounts to \$807,000 since January 29, 2016.

Question No. 1264— **Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to Statistics Canada's Table 204-0001, “High income trends of tax filers in Canada, provinces and territories, and census metropolitan areas (CMA), national thresholds annual (percent)”, for 2015 and 2016, and broken down by year: (a) what is the number of tax filers in the (i) top 1%, (ii) top 10%, (iii) bottom 50%; and (b) what is the percentage of federal and provincial or territorial income tax paid as a percentage of total tax paid for each group in (a)?

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to Statistics Canada's Table 204-0001, “High income trends of tax filers in Canada, provinces and territories, and census metropolitan areas (CMA), national thresholds annual (percent)”, for 2015 and 2016, and broken down by year, the 2015 update will be released on November 15, 2017. Data for 2016 will be released the following November, 2018.

Question No. 1265— **Mr. Mel Arnold:**

With regard to the Canadian Coast Guard Ship Hudson: (a) when will the ship be back in service; (b) why did the refit of the ship not meet its original completion date and has the refit of the ship been delayed; (c) will the refit be completed under the original \$4 million budget and, if not, what is the new budget; (d) how many voyages and research missions have been cancelled as a result of the delay; (e) what are the details of the cancellations in (d); and (f) what are the details of any briefing notes related to the ship, including for each the (i) recipient, (ii) date, (iii) sender, (iv) title, (v) summary, (vi) file number?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary for Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), on November 13, 2017, the CCGS Hudson arrived at its home base of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Further work, which has been planned for many months, will be undertaken on the Hudson in preparation for its 2018 programming which is projected to commence on April 4, 2018.

*Government Orders*

With regard to part (b), the refit of the vessel did not meet its original completion date, as the refit work being carried out by a contractor was not completed on time.

With regard to part (c), the contract for the refit has not been amended to increase the budget. A determination of the final budget cannot be made at this time, as Public Services and Procurement Canada is reviewing the terms of the contract with the original shipyard.

With regard to part (d), a total of seven science missions were impacted due to the unavailability of the CCGS Hudson for the 2017 field season. Of those, one mission was conducted on another Coast Guard vessel, four requests for proposals were issued to carry out other missions on charter vessels, one mission was cancelled outright, and another mission was substantially reduced.

With regard to part (e), the two missions involving cancellations are as follows. The majority of the Atlantic zone off-shelf monitoring program, AZOMP, mission scheduled for May 2017 was cancelled as the initial attempt to charter a vessel was unsuccessful. Some of the high-priority activities, namely the recovery of a subsurface oceanographic mooring and the deployment of Argo floats in the Labrador Sea, have been rescheduled on other Coast Guard vessels. The Natural Resources Canada Baffin Bay geoscience mission had to be cancelled, as no charter was available for the required time frame to conduct the mission.

With regard to part (f), (i) Commissioner Thomas; (ii) September 13, 2016; (iii) Gregory Lick, Director General, Operations; (iv) Memorandum for the Commissioner Vessel Life Extension of CCGS Hudson; (v) The memo seeks effective project approval and spending authority to proceed with the vessel life extension of the CCGS Hudson, at a cost of \$26.6 million. The memo also explains that the department will manage project expenditures until the funds become available in fall 2016. (vi) GCCMS: 2016-012-00707; EKME#3656821.

Not all briefing notes are included, pursuant to the government security policy and/or the Access to Information Act.

Question No. 1266—**Mr. Todd Doherty:**

With regard to the 3 metric tonnes of Nova Scotia lobster confiscated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on October 16, 2017: (a) what country were the lobsters destined for; (b) who owned or was in possession of the lobsters prior to confiscation; (c) what are the reasons for the confiscation; (d) what was the condition of the lobsters on October 16, 2017 (alive, processed, etc.); (e) what is the current status and condition of the lobsters; (f) where and how were the lobsters stored or located once confiscated; and (g) what is the process by which the lobsters will be disposed of (sold as government surplus, returned to water, etc.)?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary for Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as this occurrence is the subject of an ongoing investigation, Fisheries and Oceans Canada cannot respond to this question at this time.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

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

Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Question No. 1261 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1261—**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs:**

With regard to expenditures on media training or other communications related advice or training for Ministers since April 1, 2016: what are the details of each expenditure, including (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) Minister who received the training or advice, (iv) description of goods and services provided, (v) was the contract sole-sourced or competitively tendered, (vi) individual who provided training or advice?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### EXPUNGEMENT OF HISTORICALLY UNJUST CONVICTIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-66, An Act to establish a procedure for expunging certain historically unjust convictions and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** When the House last took up the question, there were eight minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments to the hon. member for Saskatoon West.

The hon. member for Hochelaga.

• (1220)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. The apology and Bill C-66 are a step in the right direction. I also agree with her that there is still lot of work to be done.

At the end of her speech, she made some suggestions to help the government ensure that the rights of LGBTQ2 people are not violated in the future. I would like to know whether she has any ideas about what the government could do to move in that direction.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in my speech, I talked about some of the additional pieces I would like to see the government move on to continue this important first step we are taking today with Bill C-66. However, there are other things that need to happen quickly after the apology so Canadians, especially LGBTQ2 Canadians, know the government is serious and following through.

For example, they include ending the ban on men who have sex with men being able to donate blood. There is no scientific evidence for that ban, and it needs to be removed right now. People count on people donating blood, and it is simply unacceptable.

The government has also introduced the changes to the Criminal Code around the age of consent, but that has stalled. We do not know what had with that, but we would like to see that come forward very quickly. Those are two things that the government could move on very quickly in order to continue the momentum and to show Canadians that the apology was just a first step toward making Canada more just for LGBTQ Canadians and, in fact, all Canadians.

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear the member is a passionate advocate for the LGBTQ2 community in her riding and beyond. I want to thank her for that, as well as all her colleagues in the NDP for the passionate work they do.

I was fortunate to be here for the Prime Minister's apology. I had a different view than a lot of Canadians who watched at home, as the camera was on the Prime Minister. I was able to look up at the gallery and see the faces of the individuals who had suffered, oftentimes for decades, because they were fought by their own government because of who they loved. To see the sign of relief when the government acknowledged the wrongs was significant.

The hon. member mentioned that if it was just an apology, it was only words. However, actions have to be taken. Could she take a moment to expand on that and the importance to the LGBTQ2 community in her riding? I know members from Pride Niagara were present in Ottawa for the speech. The apology was significant, but the actions were significant as well. Could she comment on that?

**Ms. Sheri Benson:** Mr. Speaker, I tried to point out the number of times governments and communities had come close to getting changes in legislation only to have another jurisdiction put the community back and deny human rights. That is the long timeline, over 50 years, of resources and people's lives to simply have human rights recognized in the charter extended to LGBTQ2 Canadians.

The apology was heard by many different people. For some people, they will have remembered the incidents and persecution that could have happened to them or a family member. Our parliamentary leader spoke to some of the individuals who were impacted. Everyone had an opportunity to hear the government's words and to apologize, which is important.

However, it is so critical, which was the gist of my comment, that legislation needs to change. We need to get going very quickly so Canadians do not see themselves going back to making a promise and LGBTQ2 Canadians needing to wait years to see that realized through legislation.

I am very proud to support and help the government and Parliament move forward as quickly as possible on Bill C-66, so we can get to some of the other matters I mentioned, which are just as important.

●(1225)

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her hard work on this file, which I have obviously been following very closely. I have seen how dedicated our two LGBTQ2 critics have been. I have to say that I am extremely proud to be associated with such a great team and to be able to support that team as often as possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the people and organizations that have been fighting for apologies and reparations for so long. Many of them live in my riding, Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

I mentioned apologies and reparations because we fought very hard to make sure the apologies would not be mere lip service. We called for concrete action, and I am pleased that the government came around to our way of thinking.

That being said, there is still one small problem. Expunging a criminal record can cost up to \$600, and the bill is not clear in that regard.

Can my colleague suggest some way to clarify that in this bill?

*[English]*

**Ms. Sheri Benson:** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of those watching the community organizations and individuals who allow us as parliamentarians to continue to bring forward the fight and change law so discrimination ends.

Earlier I asked several questions of the parliamentary secretary. We said that some things within the bill needed to be changed and we wanted the government to be open to that. One change is to ensure there is no cost involved to the victims of the government's discrimination when it comes to moving forward. We also had a bit of a conversation with the parliamentary secretary about the whole issue of pardons, which we need to explore more.

There is still some work to do, but it does not need to delay the legislation. We can move forward today, pass the legislation, and follow the apology with action.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

• (1230)

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock as 1:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-375, an act to amend the Criminal Code (presentence report), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to address this House for a second time to talk about my private member's bill, Bill C-375, an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to pre-sentence reports. I would like to thank my hon. colleague and friend, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills, for seconding this bill today.

I would like to reflect at the outset of my statement on the great honour and privilege I possess as a representative of my constituents in Richmond Hill. This is an honour that no member in this House takes lightly, and like my colleagues, I am aware of the great responsibility that comes with representing one's constituents in this House.

I came to Ottawa having made the commitment to my constituents in Richmond Hill that I would focus all my energies on advancing the progressive ideals I was elected to uphold and fight for, namely, the advancement of equality for all Canadians, in particular, those who feel voiceless and marginalized.

When it comes to the subject of mental health, we are all aware of the great sensitivity involved in addressing the challenges of this often marginalized group. It is perhaps for this very reason that we must do everything we can to ensure that no stone is left unturned in safeguarding the rights and dignity of those suffering from mental illness. This is a goal I have committed myself to working toward actively and with great care.

Through my work as founder and co-chair of the all-party mental health caucus, I, along with other participating members, heard from numerous stakeholders and experts involved in the field of mental health. I know I can speak for all members who participated when I convey how eye-opening the testimony was. What we heard painted a picture of the current mental health landscape as rife with gaps and areas for improvement. In particular, issues related to mental health and the criminal justice system came to the forefront as needing special attention.

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To obtain a better understanding of the current issues surrounding the treatment of individuals with mental illness, caucus members visited Kitchener, Ontario, where we took a tour of the Grand Valley Institution for Women, operated by Correctional Service Canada. We heard from Ms. Sherry Payne, herself a formerly incarcerated woman, who informed us of the various challenges faced in the correctional system when it comes to mental illness.

Our experiences working with the mental health caucus led to our resolve that many operational and legislative changes are still needed to improve the delivery of services to mental health sufferers, in particular those in our criminal and correctional systems.

Section 2 of the Criminal Code defines "mental disorder" as "a disease of the mind". Unlike diseases of the body, the symptoms that mental illness carries are very often hidden and difficult to diagnose. In too many instances, as well, mental illness is also misdiagnosed or ignored entirely. In Canada, 10% of the population reports symptoms consistent with mental illness. This burden, sadly, is often greater among our youth, fully 25% of whom will experience a mental health issue as they navigate to adulthood.

In our federal penitentiaries, this proportion is even higher. Over 20% of federal offenders are identified as presenting with mental health problems, often with more than one disorder. Furthermore, rates of mental illness among federal offenders have almost doubled in the last 20 years.

Globally, the World Health Organization reports that by the year 2020, mental and behavioural disorders will account for roughly 15% of the global burden of the disease, which it projects is further likely to increase in proportion in subsequent decades.

• (1235)

Even with respect to our attitudes toward mental illness, there is still work to be done. While half of Canadians reported in 2017 that they are more comfortable talking about mental health than in the five years before that, it is also reported that this has not led to an adequate and proportionate growth in community resources for those suffering from mental illness.

For individuals suffering from mental illness, theirs is often a daily struggle to integrate into families, peer groups, and society as a whole. These same families and peer groups bear an untold burden, both emotional and economical, that must be addressed.

It is estimated that the total cost of mental health problems to the Canadian economy exceeds \$50 billion annually in health care expenses and lost productivity. This represents nearly \$1,400 for every Canadian. Over the next 30 years, this cost will add up to more \$2.5 trillion for Canadians. We all must therefore recognize mental illness as an issue that affects not only the present circumstances of Canadian families but their future as well.

I am happy to be able to say that our government announced in budget 2017 that it will invest \$5 billion over 10 years to improve mental health services, with an addition of \$118.2 million to address mental health programming among first nations and Inuit people.

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Bill C-375 is also inspired by another idea. We believe that better is always possible. Bill C-375 would amend paragraph 721(3)(a) of the Criminal Code such that, unless specified, when a pre-sentencing report was required by a court, in addition to such information as age, maturity, character, behaviour, and attitude, information outlining any mental health disorder, as well as any mental health care programs available for the accused, would be provided as part of the pre-sentencing report.

I would like to take this opportunity to outline in detail why my colleagues in the House must support this essential bill to address mental health concerns in our criminal justice system.

Currently, courts are not mandated to consider the mental health history of individuals in pre-sentencing proceedings. This significantly increases the likelihood that such vital information will not be taken into account during pre-sentencing and that individuals with histories of mental health issues may not be afforded appropriate care, compassion, and treatment during the process of their rehabilitation.

What are the real-world consequences of this status quo? Pre-sentencing reports are a vital tool at a judge's disposal, and 87% of judges see pre-sentencing reports as important in giving much-needed analysis and advice on an offender's treatment needs. By and large, when a pre-sentencing report is present in a case, there is a significantly higher likelihood that an offender will receive a community sentence as opposed to a custodial sentence.

By stating plainly and unambiguously that mental health backgrounds and treatment options must be included in pre-sentencing reports along with other background information, probation officers who are tasked with preparing these reports would have to work from a clear standard whereby the investigation of an offender's mental health background would be deemed to be at least equal to other factors.

Underlying this framework is the ideal that individuals with histories of mental illness are best approached using the model of what Justice Richard Schneider terms "therapeutic jurisprudence". This, in contrast to traditional punitive approaches, seeks as a primary goal to limit offender recidivism with the courts. Thus, the bill in many ways takes one further step toward the de-institutionalization of mental health and one further step away from when mental health sufferers were subjected to mandatory and undignified confinement.

Across Canada, individuals with mental illness find themselves involved in the criminal justice system under circumstances that are tragic and horrific, both for themselves and their victims.

●(1240)

Many of the experts and advocates I have spoken to on this subject agree that a host of policy approaches are required to address this. Bill C-375 is just one such approach to addressing mental health and the criminal justice system. As a modest and uncontroversial step in the right direction, I extend my hand to all members from each caucus to work together with me on this important initiative.

In closing, I am confident that with this small yet significant change to our Criminal Code, all members of this House will do their

part in ensuring that those suffering from mental illness will be afforded the compassion and care they need and deserve.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could perhaps expand on what the government is doing, what steps it is proposing to help people with mental illness stay out of the criminal system, and what steps it might be taking to help them move back into society, providing them with the real supports they need. We need to support people with mental illness, treat it as a health issue, and help them stay out of the criminal courts and get back into society.

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Mr. Speaker, our government has been proactive on this matter.

The first step it took was to introduce, in our budget 2017, \$5 billion over 10 years. Our government is working very closely with all of the provinces and territories to ensure that those funds are properly allocated and focused on the services needed.

Our government is also working collaboratively with provinces and territories to make sure that proper indicators and metrics are developed, and that these could be reported on collaboratively with the provinces and territories.

As to what is being done at Correctional Services, as I said in my speech, I had an opportunity, together with some of my colleagues, to visit a number of Correctional Services institutions, specifically the one I mentioned, as well as one for youth sentenced to terms of under two years. I saw firsthand the support given to youth who, in the process of their incarceration, were able to get rehabilitated.

Unfortunately, because there is no consistency in our courts during the pre-sentencing report phase, these services are only highlighted and emphasized on a case-by-case basis. Fortunately, when I had an opportunity to visit the Correctional Services institutions, most of the individual needs of the youth had been identified and taken into account.

With this bill, I am hoping, with the support of my colleagues across the aisle and my caucus, to make it mandatory that those services be highlighted as part of the pre-sentencing report, to make sure they are available for individuals who will be incarcerated.

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really commend my colleague for his great initiative, not just in presenting this private member's bill but also in his very effective advocacy on mental illnesses in his work with the all-party mental health caucus.

What kind of feedback has he received from stakeholders across the country on his private member's bill, and do they support it?

●(1245)

**Mr. Majid Jowhari:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague once again for a great question and for seconding the bill today.

This bill was inspired by my discussions with many experts and advocates in the mental health field. I met with many stakeholders through my work with the mental health caucus, as well as independently. We got a chance to get an overview of the gaps that exist in the current system and how the shortcomings will be addressed.

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Notably, this bill has the support of the Canadian Bar Association, as well as the many experts I have met who deal with mental health on a day-to-day basis, such as clinical psychologists, correctional staff, and nurses, who have expressed their desire to see the changes this bill proposes.

There is a broad consensus on the need to address this issue, among many others. This issue is within the jurisdiction of the federal government, and we need to address it so we can ensure that those who are incarcerated will be afforded the programs that are available so they can be integrated into the community when their terms end.

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-375, introduced by the hon. member for Richmond Hill, an act to amend the Criminal Code. More specifically, Bill C-375 seeks to amend section 721 of the Criminal Code. Section 721 deals with pre-sentence reports. What Bill C-375 would do is amend section 721 to require that probation officers consistently, in every pre-sentence report, always report on any mental health disorder of an offender, as well as report on programs and services related to mental health that are available to the offender.

There is no question that mental health is a serious issue in Canada's criminal justice system. We know that the percentage of individuals in prison who have mental health or addiction issues is very large. Indeed, according to the latest report from the correctional investigator of Canada, more than half of the female prison population has some mental health issue and 26% of the male population has a mental health issue. Therefore, when we are talking about the criminal justice system, prisons, and issues of mental health, we are talking about a very significant percentage of the prison population.

There is no doubt that a lot of attention has been placed on issues around mental health in prisons as a result of some recent highly publicized incidents involving prisoners with mental health issues and how they were treated. There is no question that there is plenty of work to do to ensure that the health and safety of prisoners with mental health issues are protected. To that end, Parliament has a responsibility and a duty to act to ensure that those issues are addressed and to deal with shortcomings of the federal prison system in dealing with persons with mental health issues.

With that said, Bill C-375 specifically deals with pre-sentence reports. By way of background, each and every year in Canada thousands of pre-sentence reports are prepared. Pre-sentence reports are not mandatory. They are prepared at the request of a judge who may need the report or who may look forward to the report to obtain additional information and background about the offender in order to craft an appropriate sentence for that offender.

Section 721 of the Criminal Code provides that certain information must always be included in pre-sentence reports. Additionally, subsection 721(2) of the Criminal Code provides that provinces may, by regulation, require that additional information be included in pre-sentence reports in their respective jurisdictions. Additionally, judges have the discretion to request that certain issues or certain matters be addressed in a pre-sentence report when the judge deems it appropriate, having regard for the unique circum-

stances of each individual offender. Taken together, the reality today is that when we are talking about the mental health issues that may concern an offender, and issues concerning programs and services related to mental health in respect of offenders, the fact is that today such information and those issues can be addressed, investigated, and put forward in a pre-sentence report.

● (1250)

Indeed, it is not uncommon, again depending upon the specific circumstances of each individual case and offender, for judges to make that request and to take those matters into consideration. While I appreciate that Bill C-375 is a well-intentioned bill and I know that the hon. member for Richmond Hill has been a strong and passionate advocate on issues concerning mental health, vulnerable persons, and Canadian society, I believe the bill is unnecessary.

Moreover, in addition to being unnecessary, I believe that Bill C-375 has the potential to create confusion and result in unfairness and inconsistencies in the administration of justice. To that end, there is a considerable variance in the behaviours and conditions falling under the umbrella of mental illness. The fact is that not all mental illnesses and disorders are the same. Even within some disorders, the degree of impact can vary considerably. In addition to that, there is a real potential for Bill C-375 to cause delay and further backlogs in our criminal justice system.

Further, Bill C-375 would significantly increase the amount of work a probation officer undertakes in preparing a pre-sentence report. That additional work may be necessary in many cases. Again, that is already done in those cases, because by the time a verdict is rendered and a judge gets to the sentencing part of a specific case, issues concerning the mental health of an offender almost certainly have been brought to the attention of the trial judge.

Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach that can create inconsistencies, lead to confusion, result in backlogs or slow down the administration of justice, I would submit that the best approach is to do what is taking place, which is to leave it to the discretion of trial judges.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-375 sponsored by my colleague from Richmond Hill to amend the Criminal Code.

This bill has just one clause, and its objective is to provide more information on the profile of the accused in the pre-sentencing report used by the judge when determining the most appropriate sentence under the circumstances, or whether the accused should be absolved from serving a sentence.

At first reading, when the member for Richmond Hill introduced his bill, he stated the following:

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The bill would mandate that, unless otherwise specified, when a pre-sentencing report is required by a court, in addition to such information as age, maturity, character, behaviour, attitude, and willingness to make amends, information outlining any mental health disorders as well as any mental health care programs available for the accused be provided as part of their pre-sentencing report. Such information is vital for the courts to have in order to ensure that those Canadians with histories of mental illness are afforded care and compassion, and that they will receive appropriate treatment throughout the process of their rehabilitation.

**Bill C-375 states:**

Subsection 721(3) of the Criminal Code is amended by adding the following after paragraph (a): (a.1) any mental disorder from which the offender suffers as well as any mental health care programs available to them;

Pre-sentence reports are given to members with a vested interest in the case: the presiding judge, both counsel for the defence and prosecution, the parole officer, the individual and in some cases the institution where the sentence will be served.

This report serves to help the judge determine the most appropriate sentence for the accused and to inform them of the available services that might be necessary in their rehabilitation.

The NDP is committed to building a criminal justice system that works. We want to ensure that compassion and rehabilitation are at the heart of our policies. Providing information about an individual's mental health in a pre-sentencing report allows the judge to make a more informed and appropriate sentencing decision and falls directly in line with a justice system based on rehabilitation, as does including information about available mental health programs and services.

To be clear, the objective of this measure is not to disclose the mental health condition of the individual or to perpetuate the stigma or false perception that people with mental health disorders are dangerous.

The objective of the bill is to add information to pre-sentence reports with a view to helping individuals receive appropriate sentences and, with the proposed changes, receive the services they need.

People with mental illnesses are overrepresented in Canada's criminal justice system. Documenting the number of people with mental illnesses who are convicted of certain crimes will help us make the case for alternative programs and solutions. This information can also be used to develop resources and initiatives that prevent people with mental illness from entering the criminal justice system in the first place.

Although provisions providing for pre-sentence reports are set out in the Criminal Code, which is a federal legislation, the administration of the courts and law enforcement are the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories.

At present, the provinces and territories include different information in their pre-sentence reports.

Some provinces, like Nova Scotia, already advise that mental health considerations be disclosed, but this is not the case for all jurisdictions. This bill would create a national standard for all jurisdictions to consider mental health during sentencing.

Bill C-375 would also require the report to include information about any mental health care programs that might help with the individual's rehabilitation.

The following is an excerpt from a 2015 John Howard Society of Ontario report:

Since the closure of institutions serving individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities, the criminal justice system has become a repository for individuals who lack adequate resources to cope with living in the community.

The correctional investigator's 2012 annual report found that 36% of federal offenders were identified at admission as requiring psychiatric or psychological follow-up.

● (1300)

What is more, 45% of male inmates and 69% of female inmates were treated for mental health issues while in prison.

Young adults aged 18 to 34 are overrepresented in correctional facilities since, according to Statistics Canada data from 2015-16, they represent only 28% of the Canadian adult population.

An Ontario study also showed that 80% of young inmates had a mental health issue.

In 2015-16, indigenous adults were also overrepresented in provincial and territorial corrections facilities since they accounted for 26% of admissions but represent only 3% of the Canadian adult population.

The overrepresentation of indigenous adults was more pronounced for women than men. Indigenous women represented 38% of women serving a sentence in a provincial or territorial institution, whereas for indigenous men, that figure was 26%.

In the federal correctional system, indigenous women accounted for 31% of women serving prison sentences, whereas for indigenous men, that figure was 23%.

The fact that people with mental health problems are being sent to prison and not being given the appropriate care is a real problem. Last April, the *Toronto Star* published the following quote from Justice David Paciocco of the Ontario Court of Appeal. He said:

[English]

From arrest to prosecution, conviction, sentencing, use of segregation, all stages of our criminal justice system are now consistently overrepresented by people who are suffering from psychosis, mania, mood disorders, depression, alcoholism and addiction, anxiety disorders, and personality disorders.

[Translation]

The judge continued:

[English]

Those suffering from mental health issues who are swallowed up by the criminal justice system do not fare well. The use of segregation or other standard isolation practices are the clearest examples of a system whose practices rooted in punishment and control can exacerbate the challenges facing people with mental health issues. Individuals leaving the system leave with unmanaged or worsened mental health issues, which can contribute to recidivism.

[Translation]

That is exactly what we want to avoid.



The New Democrat Party is committed to working with community workers, mental health professionals, front-line workers like the RCMP, and the provincial and territorial justice systems to demand better support services for people with mental illness. We also want to make sure communities have the resources and services they need to help people with mental illness before and during incarceration.

We need to continue focusing on compassionate care to help people with mental illness rejoin society after incarceration and avoid over-criminalization wherever possible.

If we can improve our ability to assess the needs of those being sentenced, our justice system will be able to direct them to the appropriate rehabilitation resources and so reduce the risk of recidivism—even eliminate recidivism entirely, in an ideal world. That is one of the reasons the New Democrat Party is calling for more detailed pre-sentence reports and will be supporting this bill.

Mental illness can have a tremendous impact on a person's life. Disclosure of mental illness definitely needs to factor into the determination of an appropriate sentence and rehabilitation plan.

Instead of spouting tough-on-crime rhetoric, the New Democratic Party has long been looking for ways to make our justice system work. Our goal is to help people convicted of crimes who have mental health problems get the resources and support they need to be rehabilitated and become fully functioning members of society.

We believe it is important to provide more support services and resources to people with mental illness who are involved in the criminal justice system.

•(1305)

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand today and join in the second reading debate on private member's Bill C-375, an act to amend the Criminal Code.

Before I begin my speech I would like to thank my hon. friend from Richmond Hill, who in caucus and throughout this Parliament has been a tireless advocate for mental health.

This legislation would amend provisions of the Criminal Code dealing with pre-sentence reports to be more responsive to offenders with mental health issues. A pre-sentence report is ordered in some cases to help the court learn more about the person being sentenced.

Specifically, the bill would amend subsection 721(3) of the Criminal Code to provide that a pre-sentence report must, where available, and unless the court orders otherwise, contain information on any mental disorder from which an offender suffers, as well as any mental health care programs available to the offender.

Requiring information about the offender's mental health disorder would be in addition to the information that the Criminal Code currently requires to be included in a pre-sentence report. Under the current law, a pre-sentence report must, wherever possible, contain certain information about the offender, such as age, maturity, character, and willingness to make amends.

Bill C-375 would make it clear to the courts that where mental health information is readily available, it should be included in the

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pre-sentence report. For example, often offenders will provide information about their mental health situation to the probation officer who is preparing the report. The officer will often include this information in the report, which is in turn relied upon by the crown, defence counsel, and the sentencing judge.

The sponsor of the bill, the hon. member for Richmond Hill, has indicated that his intention in introducing the bill was to ensure that information outlining any mental health disorders as well as any mental health care programs available is before the courts to ensure that those offenders with histories of mental illness are afforded care and compassion, and that they will receive appropriate treatment throughout the process of their rehabilitation.

I agree with the sponsor that this is important information that can be extremely valuable to a sentencing judge. In fact, it is my understanding that criminal courts in Canada can, and do, consider the mental health information of an offender when it is before them. Any sentence that is imposed without reference to available medical evidence, including mental health information, is vulnerable to attack on appeal. I do not read this proposal, however, as compelling offenders to provide information about their mental health situation against their wishes.

I understand that including mental health information in pre-sentence reports is already common practice in many jurisdictions. The legal effect of Bill C-375 would serve to codify this practice and signal to sentencing judges that this information is relevant to their deliberations.

Inroads are being made in recent years to eliminate the stigma around mental illness. People are more willing to talk about their struggles and their lives with a mental illness. This increased openness has led us to learn more about the scope of mental illness in Canada.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada indicates that in any given year, one in five Canadians experience a mental health or addiction problem. Other statistics indicate that by the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, one in two experienced a mental illness. Additionally, we know that our young people are more likely to experience mental health issues than any other group.

It is well known that in the past decades, the number of individuals with mental health issues involved in the criminal justice system has increased. There is no singular reason for this increase, however, a number of causes have been cited as contributing factors. These include gaps in services for marginalized populations, including housing, income, and health services. In this regard I am extremely proud to be part of a government that is making great strides in these areas, for instance, the recently announced national housing strategy.

We also know that individuals with mental health illness are often likely to come to the attention of the police and be arrested and detained. Once detained, accessing appropriate mental health services can be a challenge.

*Private Members' Business*

The complexities of this issue cannot all be addressed through a private member's bill, nor can the Criminal Code solve such a profound and complex social problem.

• (1310)

However, I think it is fair to say that the sponsor's intent is to take one meaningful step in addressing the larger problem of the overrepresentation of the mentally ill in the criminal justice system. The bill proposes a narrow and targeted approach to ensure that in situations where a pre-sentence report is ordered, readily available mental health information is to be considered.

The stated goals of the bill are consistent with the mandate given by the Prime Minister to the Minister of Justice, which asks her to address gaps in services to those with mental illness throughout the criminal justice system. I think most Canadians would agree that the issue of mental illness could be better managed in the criminal justice system. It is an area where we must continue to work together with our provincial and territorial counterparts as well as community stakeholders to ensure that meaningful progress is made.

I want to be clear that improving the mental health responses of the criminal justice system is not about letting offenders off easy. On the contrary, it is consistent with our government's stated commitment to a criminal justice system that keeps communities safe, respects victims, and holds offenders to account. In particular, addressing mental health is one of the critical ways we can divert offenders from the so-called revolving door of incarceration, improve chances of successful reintegration, and make more efficient use of scarce resources. These outcomes, and not simply punitive measures, should drive our decision-making. As a result, every step we take to improve outcomes for those with mental illness is a step worthy of careful consideration by parliamentarians.

The proposals in the bill are also consistent with our government's other efforts to improve mental health care more generally across the country.

In budget 2017, the government committed \$5 billion over the next 10 years to the provinces and territories to improve access to mental health services. In addition, to ensure that federally sentenced offenders with mental health needs receive proper care, budget 2017 proposed to invest \$57.8 million over five years starting in 2017-18, and \$13.6 million per year thereafter, to expand mental health care for all inmates in federal correctional facilities.

This funding is in addition to the \$69 million over three years announced in 2016 for immediate mental health needs, and more than \$300 million provided annually to support culturally relevant mental wellness services in indigenous communities. These significant and historic investments in front-line mental health services will benefit all Canadians, not just those who find themselves at odds with the criminal justice system.

I am encouraged by these financial commitments. It reflects the importance of investing in upstream services to ensure that people can receive help when they need it, before they come into contact with the criminal justice system.

I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate on this important private member's bill. Safe and healthy communities are built upon a criminal justice system that treats all Canadians with respect, dignity,

and in a manner that always upholds the rights and freedoms afforded to all Canadians by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would like to thank the sponsor of the bill, the hon. member for Richmond Hill, for providing us with an opportunity to debate this important issue facing the criminal justice system.

**Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I want to recognize and express deep gratitude to remarkable leader, a former minister, my predecessor, the Hon. Rona Ambrose, who served the people of Sturgeon River—Parkland with distinction. It is an honour to follow in her footsteps as the representative of Sturgeon River—Parkland.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-375, an act to amend the Criminal Code in regard to pre-sentencing reports. I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Richmond Hill, for championing the issue of mental health in Canada. The bill would amend the Criminal Code to require a pre-sentencing report that contains information on any mental disorder a offender suffers from.

Canadians expect their justice system to keep them safe from high-risk individuals, and we need a policy that strikes a balance between the need to protect society from those who pose a danger and to treat with compassion those with mental illness and mental disorders. I will not be supporting the bill because I do not believe it would achieve this balance between compassion for victims and their families, and for the offenders who suffer from mental illness.

Currently, section 721 of the Criminal Code enables a probation officer to publish a pre-sentence report after the offender is found guilty. The purpose of the report is to assist the court in imposing a sentence or in determining whether an accused should be discharged. A pre-sentence report must contain the following information: the offender's age, maturity, character, and willingness to make amends. It also contains the history of previous dispositions under the Young Offenders Act and the history of alternative measures used to deal with the offender and the offender's response to those measures.

Bill C-375 proposes to add another requirement to this list: the consideration of any mental health disorder from which the offender suffers, as well as any mental health care programs available to him or her. In practice, this would create some unfairness and inconsistencies in the application of laws and justice. Not all mental health disorders are the same. In fact, even the same mental health disorders can have a great deal of variance in how they impact individuals. It is paramount that compassion for those suffering with mental health disorders be balanced with the need to protect public safety and provide justice for victims and their families.

*Private Members' Business*

These changes are also a concern because they could add considerable delays to our court system, which is already overburdened. Increased delays and complexity would not help those in the justice system who have mental health disorders, nor would they be good for victims and their families. I do not think any of my colleagues in this House would want trials to be unnecessarily delayed, or after the fact, and I believe this legislation could add delays to our system.

Our understanding of mental health continues to evolve with more research. It is an incredibly complex issue, as I mentioned. There is a danger when anyone attempts to address mental health too broadly. The requirement of the bill to add pre-sentencing reports for mental disorders is too broad. As I said, not all mental health disorders are the same, and not all of them are equally relevant to our justice system. Currently, judges are able to take into account relevant information to ensure that the mentally ill are not treated poorly, and can do so without this legislation and in a way that is not cumbersome to the system. In the case of Vince Li in Manitoba, I believe that the justice system dealt quite ably with it by showing compassion both to the offender and to the victims and their families. It shows that the system is largely working well, and I believe this legislation could further tip the balance too far in the favour of the accused and against the victims and their families.

Another danger with this proposed change would be that its broad definition could be applied to something very different from the sorts of illnesses considered relevant in past cases. For example, we are increasingly becoming aware that hard-drug addictions can be considered mental illnesses, but do we really want drug addicts using their addictions as an excuse for committing crimes? For the law to maintain the confidence of Canadians, it must be consistently applied. Sentencing exceptions for mental health disorders could create an incentive for the accused persons to claim they have a mental disorder.

Like all Canadians, we hope for the successful rehabilitation of those who have taken up a life of crime. Our first priority, however, must be the safety and security of Canadians and the communities where we work and live.

• (1315)

It is well known that an increasing number of people who have become involved in the criminal justice system have mental health disorders. These individuals pose unique challenges for police, courts, correctional facilities, and social workers.

In closing, any justice bill must balance the right of the public to be adequately protected when those who suffer from mental illness pose a danger to society with the right of those suffering from mental illnesses to be treated appropriately and with compassion.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the second reading debate on this private member's bill, Bill C-375, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding pre-sentence reports. This bill seeks to address the issue of mental health in the criminal justice system through a targeted amendment to the Criminal Code provision governing pre-sentence reports. Specifically, the bill would clarify that a pre-sentence report should, where possible, contain information about any mental

disorder from which an offender suffers as well as any mental health care programs available to them.

I am in full agreement with the sponsor that the issue of mental health is of great concern to the criminal justice system. It has been identified as a key concern by many criminal justice stakeholders over the years. As part of our commitment to broadly review the criminal justice system in Canada, the Minister of Justice has indicated that addressing the needs of vulnerable offender populations in the criminal justice system is a key priority. Addressing the issue of mental health is also part of the Minister of Justice's mandate letter from the Prime Minister. Specifically, her mandate directs her to address gaps in services for those with mental illness throughout the criminal justice system.

The issue of mental health has arisen numerous times so far in the course of the minister's criminal justice review. It was raised by experts and other community stakeholders at the series of criminal justice round tables hosted by the Minister of Justice across Canada over the past two years. This thorough consultative process included a total of 20 round tables, with at least one in every province and territory. Mental health professionals, as well as representatives from traditionally marginalized communities, including indigenous and other racialized populations, featured prominently among the participants.

The round table held in Vancouver, in August 2016, was explicitly focused on mental health. At that event, our government heard, in no uncertain terms, that our criminal justice system must do a better job responding to mental illness. Experts in the field, as well as those with first-hand criminal justice experience, explained that addressing mental health is one of the critical ways our government can reduce crime, and in doing so, create safer and more prosperous communities throughout Canada.

Not only must we recognize mental health issues among those already involved in the criminal justice system, but by improving the mental health of our citizens before they engage in criminal behaviour, we can prevent longer-term struggles, which ultimately deprive our society of the full potential of those people. This idea was borne out in many of the stories and first-hand accounts we heard from Canadians throughout the round table process.

*Private Members' Business*

A typical story, one that is all too often true in our society, frequently begins with a young person from a marginalized community. That person experiences symptoms of mental distress, often beginning with depression or anxiety, but they go unnoticed because of a lack of institutional capacity or social support. The young person's mental state deteriorates, leading to lower performance at school, social withdrawal, and poor decision-making. The person's first involvement with the criminal justice system is often pursuant to a minor offence, such as a low-value theft or mischief. Nevertheless, he or she is convicted, and most likely, on a second offence, sentenced to a short period in custody. At this stage, the system fails to recognize the presence of worsening mental illness. Once inside the criminal justice system, the youth is exposed to an environment that aggravates rather than treats the mental health issues and the young person identifies with older, more serious offenders.

Upon returning to the community, the young person now suffers from a worsening, untreated mental illness and lacks the tools to effectively reintegrate. The unfortunate reality is that this person is now far more likely to reoffend and to live a life of continued criminal behaviour.

This story should not surprise any member of this House. While it is merely an example, our experience, including that gained through our own government's consultation process, has shown that this type of scenario continues to present itself in Canadian society.

It is because of stories like these that I commend the sponsor for his commitment to addressing mental health in the criminal justice system through Bill C-375. As I read the proposal, it would essentially codify the current practice of including mental health information in a pre-sentence report, where that information is readily available. In my view, this bill would not compel offenders to provide information about their mental health situation against their wishes, nor would it provide the court with the power to order the production of mental health records or empower it to order an assessment of the mental condition of the offender.

• (1320)

I understand that it is already common practice in many jurisdictions for offenders to provide information about their mental health through a probation officer where they feel it is beneficial to them. Therefore, in my view, the practical result of the bill would be to signal to a sentencing judge that this information is a relevant consideration at sentencing.

As I was reviewing the bill, I considered how such a proposal might fit within the broader goals and mandate of the Minister of Justice. The criminal justice system must protect all Canadians and keep our communities safe, but it must also protect the rights of all Canadians.

Our government is committed to ensuring the criminal law meets the highest standards of equity, fairness and respect for the rule of law. Healthy and safe communities are built upon a criminal justice system that treats the individuals with whom it interacts with respect, dignity, and in a manner that always upholds the rights and freedoms afforded to all by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Such a proposal could be seen as complementing our government's broader objectives of improving access to mental health care services for all Canadians.

For example, as members of the House will know, our government made a historic investment in mental health in budget 2017, with \$11 billion of federal money being transferred to the provinces and territories over the next 10 years, almost half of which is to be dedicated to improving access to mental health and addiction services.

In addition, budget 2017 committed \$118.2 million over five years to improve mental health supports for first nations and Inuit peoples. This money will be provided directly to communities so they can specifically tailor programs to meet their individual needs. This funding is in addition to the \$69 million over three years announced in 2016 for immediate mental health needs and the more than \$300 million provided annually to support culturally relevant mental wellness services for Canada's indigenous communities.

These significant and historic investments in front-line mental health services will benefit all Canadians, not just those who find themselves at odds with the criminal justice system. These upstream investments in mental health services could prevent a mentally ill person from coming into contact with the criminal justice system in the first place. Investing resources in our currently saturated mental health care system could decrease the likelihood that the criminal justice system would become the default method of dealing with these individuals.

I would like to briefly reflect on the communication I have had with members of my own community, constituents in my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore, who have repeatedly written to me on the importance of mental health in Canada, particularly with respect to young people, indigenous communities, and also increasingly our seniors. In their correspondence to me, they underscore the importance for the government and all parliamentarians to take mental health seriously, to integrate mental health systematically into our policy decision-making processes, and to backstop the need to invest in mental health with adequate resources and investments.

I would like to thank the sponsor again for the steps he took in introducing the bill into the House of Commons. Through his own framework, his own lens of criminal justice and its intersection with mental health needs in Canada, he has moved the yardstick forward.

I am thankful for the opportunity to discuss this important proposal. I look forward to continued debate on this important private member's bill.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I give the floor to the hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, I must inform him that he has about two minutes to begin his speech. He will have the remainder of his time when the House resumes debate on this matter.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

**Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. As he highlighted, the purpose of Bill C-375 is to amend subsection 721 (3) of the Criminal Code to require pre-sentencing reports to provide, unless the court orders otherwise, information on any mental illness that offenders may suffer from and any mental health care programs available to them.

Our government acknowledges that the criminal justice system must provide better answers to mental health problems. To that end, in budget 2017, the government committed \$5 billion over five years to help the provincial and territorial governments make mental health care more accessible to Canadians. In her mandate letter, the Minister of Justice was asked to conduct a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system. This includes identifying the needs of offenders that suffer from mental illness and determining how these services can be improved. By acknowledging the needs of offenders suffering from mental illness, we can reduce recidivism rates and make our communities safer.

*Private Members' Business*

We will continue to look at measures to address the disproportionate representation of offenders with mental disorders in the criminal justice system. According to the Correctional Service of Canada, more than 70% of federal offenders and more than half of federally sentenced offenders have mental disorders.

• (1330)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia will have eight minutes to continue his speech and his comments when the House resumes debate on this motion.

The time provided for private members's business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*English*]

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

(The House adjourned at 1:30 p.m.)

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