



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, February 1, 2018**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 1, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association respecting its participation at the 45th annual meeting held in Marseille and Paris, France, from April 10 to 14, 2017.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank committee clerk Line Gravel, who has just retired, and analyst Raphaëlle Deraspe, who continues to do excellent work as always.

[*English*]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, three reports of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group. The first concerns the 10th annual conference of the Southeastern United States - Canadian Provinces Alliance, held in Toronto, Ontario, June 4 to 6, 2017. The second concerns the summer meeting of the Western Governors' Association held in Whitefish, Montana, United States of America, June 26 to 28, 2017. The third concerns the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance conference held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, October 1 to 3, 2017.

I want to thank all the participants from all parties, because we really worked together on the objectives of Canada in those conferences. It was really collegial on all sides.

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### CANADIAN HERITAGE

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled “Taking

Action Against Systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia”.

I would like to thank the MP for Mississauga—Erin Mills for starting us on this course of study. Diversity is our strength, and the recommendations in this report will make us even stronger.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to comment on the Conservative Party's dissenting report on Motion No. 103.

We have given voice to moderate Muslims' concerns about the implications of Islamophobia, both as a term and as a concept. Our report includes five sections, one addressing the Liberals' assertion that we face a rising climate of hate and fear in Canada, one addressing the over two dozen different definitions of “Islamophobia”, and another on religious discrimination in Canada. We also address the issue of data collection, and end with the assertion that solutions can be found not in a whole-of-government approach, but in a whole-of-Canada approach.

We are encouraging relevant communities to come together to solve the challenges that we will be facing together in the coming years. Our hope is that this report can play a positive role in addressing very real issues of discrimination faced by many Canadians, including Muslims.

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### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PROPERTY REPATRIATION ACT

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-391, an act respecting a national strategy for the repatriation of aboriginal cultural property.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is truly my honour to introduce to the House an act respecting a national strategy for the repatriation of aboriginal cultural property. This is designed to be an incremental step to encourage governments, institutions, and private collectors to reorient their thinking around the collection, custody, study, and use of indigenous cultural property.

This started for me when I recently visited the Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre near Truro. I was admiring a beautiful ceremonial Mi'kmaq robe. The curator came over and told me that this was not the real robe. The real robe is in a museum in Australia, not on display, and it has been there since 1852.

*Routine Proceedings*

This bill is designed to get us all to think about how artifacts can be returned to their rightful owners, the indigenous people right across the country, and I am very pleased to table it today. It is important that we provide this information to indigenous youth and the communities.

I am pleased that several indigenous members of this House have agreed to second the bill, and I appreciate that the member for Yukon seconded it as well. It represents the country from coast to coast, and I thank members very much.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**AERONAUTICS ACT**

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-392, An Act to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act and other Acts (application of provincial law).

She said: Mr. Speaker, we in Quebec have passed a host of laws and consultation mechanisms, both at the government and municipal levels, to protect our environment and ensure harmonious land development and social licence. The same goes for all provinces. However, none of this holds up when it comes to federal projects. From legal uncertainties and court battles to unenforceable municipal bylaws, there is no shortage of problems.

Today, I have the honour to introduce a bill that will fix all of that. This bill amends eight federal acts to impose constraints on the minister responsible for enforcing them. Once this bill is passed, the federal government will no longer be able to authorize an activity or infrastructure project that would violate provincial laws or municipal bylaws on environmental protection and land development. I am referring to pipelines, harbours, docks, airports, telecommunications infrastructure, and all property that enjoys federal immunity.

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

\* \* \*

●(1010)

**MULTICULTURALISM ACT**

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-393, An Act to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (non-application in Quebec).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a bill to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act to provide that it does not apply in Quebec.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PETITIONS****PALLIATIVE CARE**

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions today.

The first petition is related to palliative care. In this petition the petitioners highlight the importance of palliative care. They point out the passage of Bill C-14, the assisted suicide euthanasia bill, and the importance of palliative care being available to every Canadian resident that needs it. They also point out that the person must be able to clearly choose life or death.

The petitioners also point out that palliative care never hastens or prolongs death but makes the person comfortable in the last hours of life.

**PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING**

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition also refers to Bill C-14 and highlights the issue of conscience protection.

The petitioners point out that committees heard testimony from numerous witnesses with respect to the importance of conscience protection for health care professionals, physicians, nurses, and institutions. The petitioners state that they should be protected from coercion or intimidation with respect to providing assisted suicide. Sadly, this is happening in British Columbia, the first province to permit this, which is forcing hospice facilities to have assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The petitioners call on the government for legislation which would cover conscience protection.

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present from petitioners across Canada who are calling on the Government of Canada and the United Nations to act to ensure that Christians and other minorities living in Iraq and Syria have their rights protected.

The petitioners are asking specifically that they work to ensure that current and future legal frameworks in those countries promote and protect the equal and inalienable rights of all citizens and that they safeguard the dignified and continued improvement of living conditions for all minorities, but especially for returning refugees and internally displaced peoples, and that they identify and equip religious leaders and faith-based organizations so that they can play a constructive and central role in reconciling and rebuilding both Syrian and Iraqi societies.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

## WATER QUALITY

**Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition from constituents of mine in Bedford who are calling for a Lake Champlain water quality study. This week, I met with the Canadian representatives of the International Joint Commission to talk about boundary waters. Next week, I will be meeting with American representatives of the International Joint Commission. We are continuing to apply pressure.

[English]

## POVERTY REDUCTION

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition today from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, dealing with the issue of poverty in our country. The petitioners note that poverty reduction plans exist in several Canadian provinces, and other countries have shown as well that poverty can be reduced with a comprehensive strategy.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt a national poverty elimination strategy to ensure Canadians a quality of life and opportunity to succeed.

•(1015)

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of 25 petitioners. They are drawing the attention of the House to Bill C-51, an amendment that was proposed to section 176 of the Criminal Code that would eliminate protection for members of the clergy and other religious leaders.

They specifically draw attention to private member's Bill C-305, which was passed unanimously in the House. In that particular section, extra protection was given to a building or structure primarily used for religious worship, including a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple. They think the protections in section 176 should be maintained. They ask the House of Commons to abandon any attempt to repeal section 176 of the Criminal Code and to stand up for the rights of all Canadians, including all those included in the charter. They also mention that the practice of religion should be done without fear of recrimination, violence, or disturbance.

## DRUG PLAN

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition signed by residents of Winnipeg North who want the Prime Minister and all of us here to know they would like to see the federal government develop jointly with the provincial and territorial partners, a universal, single-payer, evidence-based, and sustainable public drug plan. They are requesting, in essence, to incorporate something into the Canada Health Act.

We all know that our constituents love our health care system, and it would be an expansion of our public health care system.

[Translation]

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## FEDERAL PUBLIC SECTOR LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

**Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** moved that Bill C-62, an act to amend the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act and other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-62. The bill would restore fair public service labour laws that respect the collective bargaining process. It recognizes the important role of unions in protecting the rights of workers and in helping grow Canada's middle class.

Bill C-62 affirms the Canadian values of fairness and justice. It combines the government's previous bills C-5 and C-34. It makes no substantive changes to the earlier bills; it simply incorporates the adjustments necessary to combine proposals regarding sick leave, collective bargaining, and essential services for the federal public service into one piece of legislation. Merging these two bills into one is an efficient way to restore the equity and balance in our public service labour relations regime that existed before the legislative changes were introduced by the Harper Conservatives in 2013.

In part, Bill C-62 would repeal contentious sections of Bill C-59, which was a piece of legislation introduced, without consultation, through an omnibus budget bill by the previous government. Bill C-59 had given the government the authority to essentially ignore the public service labour relations act of the day and unilaterally modify the labour relations law that applies to and protects public servants. It would have allowed the government to unilaterally impose a new sick leave regime on public servants without negotiation or consultation.

On taking office, our government committed to not exercise the powers given to the government in Bill C-59, and now we are following through on our commitment by repealing the legislation itself.

[Translation]

Public servants and their representatives have made their position on the law very clear. They are upset and believe that the law violates their right to participate in a meaningful collective bargaining process.

*Government Orders**[English]*

We agree with the public service that this law brought in changes that were neither fair nor balanced. That is why we are acting to repeal them. Bill C-62 also repeals the most contentious changes made to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act in 2013. These include changes that allowed the employer to designate essential services unilaterally, to make conciliation with the right to strike the default process for resolving conflicts, and to impose new factors that arbitrators must consider when making a recommendation or award.

• (1020)

*[Translation]*

The amendments immediately created an antagonistic labour relations regime and made employer-bargaining agent relations worse. A number of unions even brought charter challenges related to these provisions. We have every reason to believe that such challenges would have been allowed by the courts.

*[English]*

In fact, in 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Saskatchewan's essential services legislation, which included very similar provisions to the 2013 federal legislation. However, the decision to repeal these regressive pieces of Conservative legislation is not just the legal thing to do. It is the right thing to do. We studied the situation closely. We met with public servants and the organizations who represent them. We recognized that the current situation was unsustainable and indefensible, both legally and morally. As a result, Bill C-62 reverses the changes to the act that gave the government the exclusive right to unilaterally determine which services are essential. Rather, the government will work with public sector bargaining agents to both identify and agree on essential service positions.

In addition, under the new legislation, bargaining agents will have the choice once again to determine which dispute resolution process they wish to use in the event of an impasse in bargaining. They will be able to select either arbitration or conciliation with the right to strike.

As well, public interest commissions and arbitration boards will be able to determine for themselves how much weight to give the many factors that come into play when making their decisions, factors like compensation that influence the terms and conditions of today's modern workforce.

This is how the system worked before the amendments of 2013. I look forward to getting back to a collaborative and fair approach once Bill C-62 receives royal assent.

*[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, this bill will enable the government to keep an important promise it made to public service employees, their unions, and Canadians.

*[English]*

That was our promise to negotiate in good faith with bargaining agents to reach fair agreements that are fair and reasonable for federal employees and for Canadian taxpayers. The facts are clear in

terms of the previous government's lack of commitment to bargaining in good faith.

When our government took office in 2015, all the collective bargaining agreements with public servants had expired. In fact, there were 27 collective bargaining agreements with 15 bargaining units. They had all expired under the previous government. Some of them had expired for almost four years. No public servants had collective bargaining agreements when we formed office. We made it clear that we would work with public servants. We would negotiate in good faith. After two years of hard work and good faith negotiations, we have achieved deals that now represent 91% of public servants. Thus, 91% of public servants now have collective bargaining agreements that were negotiated in good faith.

That success in concluding collective agreements was one achieved in partnership. From the public service we worked closely with people like Robyn Benson from PSAC and Debi Daviau from PIPSC. We worked together, not just on areas of economic increase but on other areas where we can improve the quality of the lives of public servants, and work with them to improve the outcomes for the Canadian public, the people we all serve, those of us on the elected level and the public service, the professional public service we have in Canada, which is one of the most effective anywhere in the world.

This act today, Bill C-62, continues our work toward restoring balanced labour laws that recognize the important role of our public service and the unions that represent them. In this system, the employer-employee relationship is more equal, with both parties within our approach having crucial roles in ensuring workers receive decent pay, are treated fairly, and work in safe, healthy work environments.

Restoring a culture of respect for and within the public service has been and is a priority of our government, a culture that encourages federal employees and the government to work together to fulfill our commitments to Canadians. Ultimately, we are all working together to improve the lives of citizens. The bottom line is that Bill C-62 will undo the measures that stacked the deck in favour of the employer and against the public servants and the bargaining agents representing them. It also highlights our ongoing commitment to support the Public Service of Canada.

As a society we must never roll back fundamental labour rights that unions have worked very hard to secure. Rather, we need to always ensure that workers can organize freely, bargain collectively in good faith, and work in safe environments.

Members may remember how in January 2016 the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour introduced legislation, Bill C-4, to repeal two other unfair labour law bills from the previous government, Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, and how we voted to support that legislation in the autumn of 2016. Those two bills by the former government introduced a number of contentious measures related to the financial disclosure process of unions and their certification.

*Government Orders*

●(1025)

Bill C-4, which received royal assent, reversed those provisions that would have made it harder for unions to be certified and easier for them to be decertified. It also amended the Income Tax Act to remove the onerous and redundant requirement that labour organizations and labour trusts provide specific information annually to the Minister of National Revenue. This included information on the non-labour activities, which would then have been made available to the public. We already had laws in place prior to that, which ensured unions are, in fact, financially transparent and accountable to members.

What is more, the contentious measures this legislation introduced were not formulated in accordance with the principles of respectful consultation. This includes, in terms of consultation, the traditional tripartite consultation process among the employer, unions, and governments normally used whenever we consider reforming labour relations. Therefore, the laws introduced by the previous government were deeply flawed and we, quite rightly, moved to repeal them.

My point is that the bill we are considering today is only the latest in a series of actions that demonstrate the government's commitment to bargaining in good faith with labour leaders and public service bargaining agents. This is of tremendous importance, not only to the welfare of our public service employees but to Canadian citizens, whom we all work to serve. Labour unions play an important role in protecting the rights of workers and in growing the middle class. We respect them and the people they represent.

It is public service employees who administer Canada's income support programs, such as the old age security benefit, for instance, that provides seniors with an important source of income. They are the RCMP and the public servants who helped thousands of asylum seekers who came to Canada earlier this year, as an example. They are the people who help fellow citizens displaced by wildfires. They are the public servants who serve Canadians day in, day out, and they come from all walks of life. They offer an incredible range of expertise and experience that the government draws on to ensure the delivery of services to people across Canada, and, in fact, around the globe.

We need our public service employees to be respected for the great work they do. More than that, we also want young people graduating from our colleges and universities to see the public service as not just a great place to build a career but a great place to build a country. I often speak to young people who are interested in entering the public service. Some of them, for instance, are involved in modern digital work and what I explain to them when they are looking at their options is that we cannot give them the stock options that they may receive with a tech start-up, but we can give them something bigger and that is an opportunity to paint on a larger canvas and improve the lives of Canadians. I would encourage all young people to consider spending at least part of their lives in public service, either within the professional public service or at the political level. The opportunity to improve the lives of our fellow citizens is a rare and important one.

To do that, we need to make some fundamental changes to the public service. We need the public service to be less hierarchical. We need to make it easier for people with ideas and ambition to come

into the public service to make a difference, and potentially go back out after tackling some specific projects. There is a lot of work we need to do, but I continue to believe that the public service, either at the professional level within the Public Service of Canada or at the political level, remains one of the best ways one can actually improve the lives of our fellow citizens.

Throughout our history, our public service unions and, broadly, our labour unions have been a force of positive change. They have fought to secure the benefits that Canadian workers now take for granted, whether it is a minimum wage or a five-day workweek, parental leave or health and safety regulations. When labour relations are balanced and fair, Canadian workers benefit, but the country does as a whole as well. In fact, the economy does as a whole.

Unions and employers must be on an equal footing when it comes to negotiating wages and other important issues and benefits that come up in the modern workplace. In the federal public sector, federal employees won the right to collective bargaining in 1967. At the time, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson said in Parliament that this right is "rooted in the concept of equity and equality between the government as employer and organizations representing its employees".

●(1030)

We are continuing to fight for this right today. The bill being considered today is strong proof of that principle and reflects that. It is strong proof of our commitment to restore a culture of respect for and within the public service. It is proof of the faith we have in Canadians and the positive and uniting values that hold our country together.

I am proud of the work we are doing as a government, and much of the work we are doing as a Parliament in the discussion of these issues, and also of the restoration of positive working relations with the labour unions, the labour movement, and the federal public service. I want to thank all hon. members of the House who have supported and continue to support our efforts to restore fairer public service labour laws.

As parliamentarians, our shared challenge is to continue to work in the spirit of respect and engagement. All of us can do this by supporting Bill C-62. It would go a long way toward recognizing the important role of our federal public service and the unions, the bargaining agents who represent them and protect their rights. It is the right way to show our support for our professional and exceptional public service employees and to recognize the important work they do every day on behalf of all of us in improving the lives of our citizens.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate and thank the President of the Treasury Board for delivering part of his speech in French. The House can count on me to commend anyone who speaks in both official languages, especially those who may not have a natural ability to speak the other official language. I want to be clear. For me, the second official language is English, and I assume that French is the second official language for the President of the Treasury Board. My compliments end there.

I will have an opportunity to discuss the substance of the bill in greater detail. We see this bill as a logical extension of the Liberal approach, which involves thanking union leaders for their hearty and financial support during the last election campaign. This bill, much like Bill C-4, which I will come back to later, is more about pleasing union leaders than looking out for the concerns of workers. That is why we are disappointed by this bill.

Will the President of the Treasury Board just admit that this bill is a way of thanking the unions that gave them such strong support and were willing to hand over \$5 million right before the election campaign, showing no respect for our election laws and no respect for the Conservative government, which had been duly elected by Canadians?

•(1035)

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to tell my colleague how much I appreciate his patience with my efforts to speak French. I wish he had the same patience with regard to our bill. We inherited a bad situation from the previous government, and we are working very hard to re-establish a culture of respect toward the public service. It is very important to work closely with the public service to implement significant, progressive changes. We have made many changes, such as cutting taxes for the middle class and introducing the Canada child benefit, which makes a big difference in the lives of families in this country.

[English]

We have worked hard. The member asked why we are doing this. We are doing this to restore a culture of respect for and within the public service of Canada. We appreciate the work being done by our public service. The previous government gratuitously picked fights with the public service, while we are working with the public service to deliver a progressive agenda for Canadians, and in fact, it is working. The changes we have made as a government in working with our public service, reducing taxes for the middle class, and the new Canada child benefit, which has lifted—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The audio is not working. We are getting feedback.

I would ask the hon. President of the Treasury Board to perhaps recap the last 30 seconds and carry on from there, and then we will get on to the next question.

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, we have actually introduced very progressive policies as a government, economic policies that are working, creating the best economic growth in the G7, the best economic growth in Canada in over a decade, and the lowest unemployment rate going back to the 1970s. We would not have been able to do that without the work of our public servants. We are

pulling in the same direction. We are working hard with our public servants. We are re-establishing a culture of respect. We have re-established that in our public service.

Again, the previous government was picking fights with public servants, was gratuitously attacking the public service. I remember in this House the previous Conservative president of the treasury board attacking the public service in the House of Commons. I cannot imagine a CEO of any publicly traded company standing up and attacking his own workers, who are required for the company to do what it needs to do.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing forward this important piece of legislation after the severe attacks by the previous government on union members.

The Liberal government said that this bill would repeal portions of former Bill C-4 to restore the labour relations regime that existed prior to 2013. However, this bill does not address changes enacted by former Bill C-4 to the Canadian Labour Code that make it harder to refuse unsafe work, which is critical to workers.

Does this member support repealing those provisions?

•(1040)

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague, who has been a very strong advocate in this House for labour and for workers.

There have been a number of pieces of legislation. This one specifically applies to the public service and reversing some of the regressive changes made by the previous government in terms of labour relations with the public service. My colleague, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, previously introduced legislation, which has been passed in this House, to reverse some of the regressive changes made by the previous government, writ large, in terms of labour relations in Canada.

As a government, we will always do everything we can to ensure a fair and balanced labour and negotiation regime, not simply for pay and benefits but also broadly. Workplace safety is critically important. A discussion that is ongoing and very current today is the ability to work in a harassment-free environment and respecting the rights of workers to work in a harassment-free environment that is safe and respectful in every way.

This is one piece of legislation. It is part of a legislative package. Some of our responsibility at Treasury Board is in terms of our management of labour relations with the public service as the employer of the public service. My colleague, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, in her work and some of the legislation introduced and passed previously by this House, has addressed some of the other areas of labour broadly.

We are working very closely, by the way, with labour organizations, including the CLC and people like Hassan Yussuff and others. We see these as works in progress—



*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I would encourage hon. members, from time to time, to direct their attention to the Chair. It helps us to give clues on the amount of time still available to them.

We have time for one last question and comment.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the President of the Treasury Board for going on at some length about the necessity of a culture of respect between the government and the public service. Of course, this has the practical benefit of inspiring the public service to work effectively for the government and the public it serves, but there is also a substantive legal issue around the freedom of association and the need to bargain in good faith.

I am curious about the President of the Treasury Board's thoughts on how this piece of legislation is going to ensure that the problems that may exist between public sector unions and the government are reserved for the bargaining table and not for our courts.

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, we will not agree with the public service sector unions or unions at large on every issue. However, the difference between us and the previous government is that we can disagree without being disagreeable. We can identify areas where we can work together, common ground where we can improve, such as the areas of wellness and mental health. For instance, we have achieved a lot in terms of the work we have done with the unions on mental health, and I would commend to any member in this House the report and recommendations on mental health within the public service.

We have achieved a great deal in terms of diversity within the public service and what we can do to encourage and support more diversity within the public service. That was done in partnership, with the leadership provided by both the public service unions and the government.

We will not agree on everything. Sometimes the public service unions will convince us, sometimes we will convince them, and sometimes we will meet in the middle. That is what we call a partnership between respectful organizations that understand the importance of the work we are doing together, with the objective, ultimately, of improving the lives of citizens.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to share the official opposition's opinion on Bill C-62. As I said a few moments ago during the question and comment period following the speech given by the President of the Treasury Board, we are opposed to this bill. We think that it seeks to please union bosses rather than making public servants a priority.

According to the government, this bill seeks to improve the bargaining process, but we do not think that the government is taking the right approach. We do not think that this bill actually improves the process; rather, it seems its aim is to please union bosses. During the last election, those union bosses were prepared to invest \$5 million in advertising just before the election, without any regard for campaign finance laws, just to hurt the government that was duly elected by Canadians in 2011. The political party that was in office at

that time, the Conservative Party did what it could to respond, but of course it was at a disadvantage in terms of spending money and accountability. I will come back to that a little later.

[*English*]

Our concern with this bill is that this is payback. It is not the first payback by Liberal government to the union's leader, because we saw it a year and a half ago when the government tabled Bill C-4. Bill C-4 was established by the government to kill two pieces of legislation we introduced when we were in office, which would permit and give more democracy and transparency in the union system.

[*Translation*]

This Liberal bill is the logical next step for the Liberals, although certainly not for us, and fits in nicely with what the government is doing to thank union leaders for their generous support during the last election campaign. As I was saying earlier, this bill seeks to establish certain bargaining measures. However, make no mistake, the Liberals' real goal here is to make the union leaders happy with the government's position. This falls clearly in line with the Liberal policy to please union leaders.

Almost two years ago to the day, the then minister of labour, an MP from Alberta, introduced Bill C-4. I was the official opposition employment critic at the time so I worked with the minister, together with my friend, the hon. member for Foothills. We fought tirelessly against that bill, which sought to annihilate two bills that were introduced and passed by the Conservatives under the previous prime minister between 2011 and 2015. Those two bills, C-377 and C-525, addressed democracy, transparency, and accountability of unions.

We Conservatives believe that if workers are to have the respect they deserve, they must be given the necessary tools. This includes asking union leaders to disclose their salaries and financial statements to the public. At the time, it was argued that this was something they could do themselves. However, when a union member pays his union dues, he is entitled to a tax refund. That concerns all Canadians, because it is their money being handed out as tax refunds, to the tune of \$500 million.

Union leaders were not pleased that we were asking them to disclose all their expenses and salaries. However, when you have nothing to hide, you have a clear conscience. Of course, their natural allies, the Liberals, opposed the move and pledged to reverse the decision, which is tantamount to doing away with transparency. Thus, one of the first legislative positions of this very government, which boasts about being the most transparent in history, was an attack on union transparency.

*Government Orders*

•(1050)

[English]

This was the first bill that was killed by Bill C-4. The other bill was about democracy inside the union. If workers wanted unions in their shops, we asked to have consultation, but private consultation, a secret ballot. This is the best way to ensure people will be represented. The will of the people will be expressed with a lot of strength under secret ballots.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that two years ago you were elected by secret ballot, which is good. Who can oppose secret ballots in the House of Commons? When we elect a Speaker of the House, it is by secret ballot. However, the Liberals do not want to have secret ballots when workers decide whether to create unions in their shops. That is not fair. This is why we were, and still are, the champions of democracy and transparency in unions. Why are we champions of that? First and foremost, the most important people in the workforce are the workers, not the union bosses.

However, that is what the Liberals would do with this bill. The Liberals are on the side of union bosses instead of being the champions of the workers. I can assure the House that we will always be on the side of the workers. The government wants to kill that democracy and transparency.

[Translation]

That is what the Liberal government is trying to do with a series of bills to please union bosses and chip away at, if not wipe out entirely, everything the Conservative government did to enhance union transparency and democracy. That is why we still oppose this bill, which we do not think is right.

I should also point out that the government's approach has been a bit sloppy. Bill C-62 is a mash-up of two previously introduced bills, Bill C-5 and Bill C-34. Bill C-5 was introduced in February 2016, which is almost two years ago now, and Bill C-34 was introduced in November 2016. The Liberals have extracted elements of both bills and inserted them into the bill we are debating today. Aside from the fact that we disagree with the provisions in the bill, which is no secret, we expected greater diligence from the government on this matter. They are the ones who will have to answer for it, though.

Members will recall the unfortunate statements made almost two years ago when debating Bill C-4 in the House. One of the arguments made by Liberal opponents was that the bills we passed, namely Bills C-377 and C-525, were backdoor bills. One of the most eminent members of the Liberal caucus, the member for Winnipeg North, said this. We know this member often rises to speak. He is vocal in the House, to say the least.

[English]

Those were sad memories for me when my friend, the Liberal member for Winnipeg North, called the two pieces of legislation "backdoor bills". They were private members' bills. That is disrespectful. Each and every member of the House is a front-door member. Therefore, when we table something, it is tabled by the front door. There are no backdoor members, no backdoor pieces of legislation, no backdoor nothing. Everything is done by front-door members of Parliament, from whatever party. That is where we stand.

[Translation]

This experienced member's comments were an insult to all his government colleagues who introduce private members' bills, which we Conservatives respect even though we may not agree with them. That concludes my remarks on this bill.

We are very concerned about this bill. We believe that it is important to think of the workers first and foremost. We realize that government officials and, of course, union officials are in the midst of negotiations.

•(1055)

That goes without saying. One cannot negotiate with 500,000 people. We understand that, but those 500,000 people must trust the representatives they appoint to negotiate with government officials. The best way to establish this trust, to strengthen it, to cement it, if you will, is to ensure that there is greater transparency and democracy within unions, and the best way to achieve that is to have full disclosure. Then, if they want to make that leap and establish a union, they can use the secret ballot. That is the best way and the one which can be influenced the least, whether in a positive or negative manner. Unfortunately, this government has directly attacked this principle, which we consider to be fundamental.

In response to my question, the President of the Treasury Board referred to certain financial realities in Canada, but he forgot to mention a few things, particularly when he talked about support for families. The foremost duty of the President of the Treasury Board is to balance the books. Theoretically, he is the government's "Mister No", the person who says yes or no to government spending. Why did he say yes to the first plan for government assistance for children, when the government forgot to take into account one minor detail, namely, inflation? As a result of this oversight, four years from now, parents will be getting less than they did from our former government six years earlier. Way to go, guys; that is great.

Any junior accounting technician in a company who forgot to calculate inflation would be kicked to the curb. How is it possible that the President of the Treasury Board, whose primary duty, undertaken at the behest of the Prime Minister, is to make sure that the numbers add up, somehow missed this administrative detail, namely calculating inflation? That is pathetic. He should be ashamed of such an oversight.

On another note, we also provided assistance for children, but we had a balanced budget. I am appealing to the President of the Treasury Board's dignity and sense of responsibility. He has a duty to balance the books. This government is running colossal and compulsive deficits.

*Government Orders*

Two and a half years ago, the Liberal Party campaigned on running small deficits during the first three years and balancing the budget in 2019 when the economy is strong. That was the Liberal promise. Where are we today? This government has created deficits that are two and a half times larger than promised, and worse yet, it has no clue how it is going to return to a balanced budget. Never in the history of Canada, in peacetime, has a government had a strong economy and no plan to achieve zero deficit. It is unacceptable because the deficit leads to debt that will be left to our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to contend with.

I call on the President of the Treasury Board to tighten the purse strings. He is an experienced parliamentarian who has been serving this country for over 20 years in different capacities and on behalf of different parties. I appeal to his dignity and ask him to tighten the purse strings and especially to send Canadians a clear message that, just because his government has been overspending, does not mean that it will not balance the budget one of these days.

We think that the government should have a minimum plan to balance the budget. Will the government do so in 2019, as it promised? Will it do so in 2045, as the finance department's most recent report indicates will be the case if nothing changes? That would be absolutely ridiculous, but it would be even worse if the government had no plan at all for balancing the budget. Unfortunately, that is in fact the case. This government does not have a plan, and we very strongly condemn it for that. We are calling on the government to, at the very least, determine when it will balance the budget.

The government is turning its back on ordinary workers as it seeks to please its union leader partners and friends.

● (1100)

Ordinary federal employees have been suffering for almost two years now because of the Liberal government's bad decision to give the go-ahead to implement Phoenix. That is today's reality. We are gathered here in the House to talk about a bill that will make union bosses very happy. Meanwhile, unionized workers are still suffering as a result of the Phoenix problem. We have to be very careful here. Our thoughts are with all the heads of households and workers who have been hit hard by the Phoenix pay system problems. Enough can never be said and done to help these people. Canadian workers in my riding and the other 337 ridings have had their lives turned upside down by the Phoenix pay system.

A fact is a fact. The record shows that under the former government the ministers responsible put a kibosh on this project on two occasions. Both in July 2015 and September 2015, the ministers said that the Phoenix pay system should not be deployed because it was too risky. In January 2016, reports suggested not moving forward because the systems were not ready, it still had bugs, and most departmental financial directors recommended putting the project on hold. Unfortunately, on February 24 the government gave the go-ahead. In three weeks and a few hours, Phoenix will have been up and running for two years. A few weeks later, on April 26, the second phase of the Phoenix system was implemented. Nothing was done for 18 months even though alarms were sounding and red flags were raised all over the place. It took the Liberals months to admit that there was a problem.

It is sad that we are creating a bill that caters to union bosses instead of focusing on workers. Workers should be the priority, especially for the President of the Treasury Board, who claims that the government wants to be fair and equitable and says he wants to think positively and work together with the public service. However, today we are debating a bill introduced by the government in an attempt to pander to union bosses, instead of focusing first and foremost on the employees working in the public service.

For these reasons, we are going to vote against Bill C-62, because we feel it caters exclusively to union bosses. In fact, that was the same problem we had with Bill C-4, which attacked and demolished the fundamental principles of democracy and union transparency, principles that we and all workers hold dear. Bill C-62 is the logical but deplorable sequel to Bill C-4, which was tabled by the government almost two years ago now. We can therefore assure workers that we will always be on their side, not on the side of bosses and unions.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched on a whole host of issues. However, I would like to quickly address his comments with respect to Phoenix.

The member talked about the fact that we were advised to dial back in January of 2016. However, the reality is that the previous Conservative government fired 700 compensation advisers throughout the public service. These were the people who did that work. Therefore, to suggest that we could suddenly stop the process is completely inaccurate. We could not have done that. The motions were already in process, individuals had been fired or let go, and there was no opportunity to start dialling back and not implement Phoenix.

Let us talk about the legislation being introduced today.

Bill C-59, which had been introduced by the previous Conservative government, had provisions in it that took a heavy-handed approach to perhaps some bad apples in the bunch. In my experience of dealing with the public service and unions, when we can work collectively with unions, when we can collaborate together to bring forward good policy, that is when we truly get the benefit of this. That is what the legislation before us today would do. It attempts to create an environment in which we can work with the unions to bring forward good legislation so we can have decent policy from which they can benefit and we can also benefit.

Does the member not see the value in working collaboratively with our unions?

● (1105)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, there are two points. I will address the issue of Phoenix in a few minutes. For sure, we want fairness in negotiations. For sure, we want collaboration in negotiations. For sure, we want a win-win situation each and every time we address this and we have negotiations. However, for that, first and foremost, we have to respect the worker, and then work with the union representative.

*Government Orders*

However, that is not the case here. What the government did with Bill C-4, and this bill too, was to kill the confidence workers had in their leaders. It killed democracy, and the transparency we have in government. That is why we will always be the champions and fight for the worker instead of the union boss.

As we know, union bosses gave tremendous support to the Liberal Party and were ready to spend \$5 million just before the election rolled out, \$1 million without consulting the members, by the way. However, that \$5 million would not be spent during the election campaign.

To address the Phoenix issue, I would be very pleased to table in the House many documents that prove, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Liberal government should not go ahead with Phoenix. These documents include reports from Friday, December 4, 2015; January 13, 2016; and January 20, 2016. Unfortunately the government decided to move ahead with it.

**Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the fact that on three occasions we were approached to look at bringing Phoenix in, and we realized there were mistakes. Still, the same number of people were there. The Liberals said that because so many people were missing, they had to go ahead, or they could not get the information.

Could the member explain that those numbers did not change within that short period of time, that the staff that messed up was the same when they took over government.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay my respects to my colleague from Yellowhead for the tremendous job he does in the House of Commons on behalf of his constituents.

Exactly the same number of people worked on this situation as before. The point is that the member from Kingston raised the issue that we let go so many people. I would remind him that the Liberals still went ahead with this, with 300 people. They blame us for what they did as soon as they became the government.

This is why the issue is very touchy. When we were in office, two times decisions were made by our government to not move forward. There were three red light signals in January. I have all the documents to table to prove that, but unfortunately the government decided go forward with this on February 24, 2016.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. For the past 35 years, I have worked in various government agencies. I have been a manager for 25 years: I ran a community-based housing organization, I was a provincial public servant, and I was a city councillor. What I learned from my experience is that these government agencies, as well as the federal government, are service organizations. For the most part, our mission is carried out by employees. They are the ones on the front lines providing services. As members of Parliament, we are here to determine how to make better use of budgets and how to provide better services to the public. Public servants are the ones on the front lines providing these services. What I learned working as a manager in various government agencies is that, when we respect the people on the front lines, when we make an effort to provide them with the best working conditions possible with the budget we have, they provide

better services. Public servants are more dedicated and, in the final analysis, everyone wins.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts about this.

● (1110)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to answer questions put to me by my distinguished colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, whom I respect and hold in high esteem. It reminds me of the good times we had working together on certain bills, including the bill on medical assistance in dying. It was a delicate subject, but we worked well together, because there was no room for partisanship.

My colleague's question concerns the fact that governments are formed to serve Canadians, that the public service exists to serve Canadians, and that we must create winning conditions to ensure that employees feel well treated so that they can provide good service. Of course, we do not disagree. That is why we are on the side of workers. We are not on the side of union bosses. That is an important distinction.

The Liberal government is cozying up to the big union bosses. It is their choice and their decision. The big bosses campaigned, with much fanfare, against the former government and in support of the current government. The big union bosses also decided to spend \$5 million just before the election was called, without consulting workers and in contravention of political party financing rules and the election laws governing financing and public spending. That is why the prime minister called the election on August 2. We, the Conservatives, are always prepared to stand up for workers. Giving union bosses every advantage is not standing up for workers. That is why our two bills, which were attacked and defeated by Bill C-4, focused on union transparency and democracy.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions, we have heard the discussion on Phoenix. It is fair to say that when it comes to the minister responsible for Phoenix or the parliamentary secretary, my seatmate, and I have had the opportunity to have many discussions with him with regard to this, it is of the highest importance for the department. When we are talking about Phoenix, we are talking about public servants who have put a great deal of effort into providing quality work and serving Canadians. It is a high priority. The government is investing in our public service to ensure we can get this issue resolved as quickly as possible. There is a high sense of co-operation, a good working relationship with those who are responsible for Phoenix, and we wish them well in trying to resolve this. We understand the importance of our public service and its workers.

*Government Orders*

Would my colleague across the way not agree that we can have more harmony within our public service if we have good labour relations? This government has strived to achieve that. In good part we have been successful. We can see that with the agreements we have achieved with public servants since we have been in government.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I said a few minutes ago. We are concerned for the workers, and we will always be the champion of them, civil servants who are there to give services to the people. This is why we have a government. This is why we have civil servants. This is why we have a bureaucracy that tries to help people.

On the other hand, we also have the union bosses, and this bill is designed to please them. That is why we are opposed to it. Our first concern will always be the worker, will always be the civil servant. I can assure each and every worker, the civil servants that we will fight for them instead of for the union leaders.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill C-62, which addresses a key issue for all those who believe in democracy.

The NDP has always defended workers' rights and the rights of all Canadians in order to ensure that no one is left behind. That is why we believe it is important to continue playing an active role in this debate. Unions are the machinery that make democracy work. They took part in every struggle and are constantly coming up with innovative ideas. They have given workers a voice and a measure of power. I applaud their work and their unwavering dedication, and I want Canada to remain an egalitarian society.

Unfortunately, in the past decade, we have neglected our public servants, violated their rights, and subjected them to dramatic cutbacks and restrictive legislative measures. Today, thousands of employees are still not being paid properly because of Phoenix. Once again, as always, the NDP stood by Canada's public servants and their unions throughout the process. The NDP would like to see public servants and the government enjoy a relationship based on responsibility, trust, and respect, today and in the future. That is why we are proposing concrete measures to reinstate a healthy working climate and a relationship of trust in the public service.

Among other things, we propose protecting whistle-blowers; granting powers to the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada; adopting a code of conduct for departmental staff; and restricting the growing use of temporary employment agencies to the detriment of permanent employees.

We are as determined as ever to pursue these important goals. It is not a question of modifying a few policies here and there. We need a real change in attitude. The NDP will continue to demand that the government re-establish a free and fair collective bargaining process in the public service, and that it safeguard acquired protections and rights.

On October 17, 2016, the government introduced Bill C-62, which we are discussing today. Yes, I said 2016. The bill is more than welcome. It is aimed at re-establishing fair framework

legislation for labour relations in the public service, and it is raising a lot of expectations. In December 2013, the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act was amended to eliminate the procedures for the choice of process of dispute resolution, including those involving essential services. The NDP vigorously opposed these amendments, which the Liberals are now looking at.

In our 2015 platform, we promised Canadians that we would defend the interests of public sector workers.

It is because of this promise, which we intend to keep, that we are supporting Bill C-62 today. The bill repeals various sections of the two profoundly anti-union legislative measures adopted by the former government, namely Bill C-59 and Bill C-4. The Harper government's first legislative measure attacked by Bill C-62 is the former Bill C-59, in particular section 20. The bill unilaterally imposed an inferior system for the management of disability and sick leave on public servants, which was an unjustified and major attack on the rights of public service workers.

That bill also abolished employees' right to good faith bargaining, taking sick leave out of federal public sector collective agreements so that the employer could unilaterally modify that leave outside the bargaining process.

One of the key provisions of current public sector collective agreements relates to sick leave. It gives full-time employees 15 days of leave per year to be used in case of accident or illness.

The Conservatives' Bill C-59 also took away accumulated unused sick leave days and imposed a short-term disability plan on public service employees. To make matters worse, the Conservatives introduced a seven-day unpaid waiting period before employees would receive their short-term disability benefits.

• (1120)

This is unacceptable. The previous government had the nerve to claim that these measures would save \$900 million, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

According to a 2014 report by the parliamentary budget officer:

...the incremental cost of paid sick leave was not fiscally material and did not represent material costs for departments in the CPA.

The quotation speaks for itself. It means that most employees who are on sick leave are not replaced, resulting in no incremental cost to departments.

The parliamentary budget officer confirmed that public service employees use sick days at about the same rate as private sector employees. An average of 11.52 days were used in the public sector, compared to 11.3 in the private sector. A difference of 0.2 days is pretty minor.

*Government Orders*

Division 20 of part 3 of Bill C-59 also authorized the Treasury Board of Canada to nullify terms and conditions in existing collective agreements. It gave the employer the authority to override many provisions of the Public Service Labour Relations Act, including the statutory freeze provisions that maintain the status quo during the collective bargaining process.

Members may be surprised by what I am about to say. Under the provisions of Bill C-59, employees would be forced to choose between reporting for work even if they are sick and losing a percentage of the salary they need to survive.

Robyn Benson, the national president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, denounced these measures. According to PSAC, the sick leave plan for federal public servants is essential, and it must ensure that employees do not have to work when they are sick. That seems obvious to me, and I agree with PSAC.

I worked as a manager in various government and community organizations for 25 years. I managed a number of teams and a hundred or so employees. As a manager and as a member of Parliament, I believe that it is totally ineffective to make employees report for work when they are sick. It is even worse to cut employees' sick days by more than half.

The second legislative measure of the Harper government addressed by Bill C-62 is former Bill C-4, in particular section 17, which radically changes the collective bargaining rules in the public service by giving the government full control over union rights, such as the right to strike and the right to arbitration. Bill C-4 takes away bargaining agents' right to choose arbitration as a means of resolving collective bargaining disputes, making conciliation the default process. However, arbitration is a valid solution in situations where members want to avoid a strike, and the right to arbitration should therefore be maintained.

Section 17 of Bill C-4 also undermines the right to strike by making it illegal to strike if at least 80% of the positions in a bargaining unit provide essential services, as defined by the employer. Under Bill C-4, it is up to the government to designate which positions are essential, rather than working with the bargaining agent to negotiate an agreement on essential services.

This same section 17 infringed on workers' rights in cases where the employer consents to arbitration by requiring adjudicators to give priority to Canada's financial situation in relation to its budgetary policies.

Discrimination complaints filed by public servants to the Canadian Human Rights Commission were simply erased. These measures are unacceptable.

That is why it is time to take action. This sets aside or amends changes that were made to four statutes during the last lost decade when the Conservative government violated union rights. I am referring to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act, the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the Public Service Employment Act.

The NDP always made a point of opposing the former Conservative government's attempts to limit union rights, mainly the public sector workers' right to strike.

• (1125)

We are therefore happy to support the government's efforts to undo the Conservative Party's damage and make Canada's public sector labour code equitable once more. The NDP is also happy to support Bill C-62.

We do not support it blindly, however. My job as an opposition MP is to scrutinize the bill and identify elements of it that need fixing. By expressing opposing views, sharing knowledge, and engaging in dialogue, we will come up with ideas to refine this bill and make sure it does everything it is supposed to, and it certainly needs help on that front. That is why I will now take a critical look at the bill's weaknesses.

After all the back and forth on this, Canada's workers deserve an ironclad law that will level the playing field for everyone involved and restore the balance of power. Although Bill C-62 is progress, it is just the first step toward instituting all the measures we want to see.

We should never legislate easy solutions to the problems we face. We have to avoid that. The NDP fought very hard to have the government abolish the previous government's initiative that attacked provisions governing public servants' sick leave. Bill C-62 can do that by repealing Division 20 of former Bill C-59 on sick leave.

Why is the government concurrently working on a new health regime that has short-term disability provisions similar to those proposed by the Conservatives in the past? That is the first reason why Bill C-62 does not allay all of our concerns.

Other points have me wondering. The greatest weakness of Bill C-62 is that it does not reverse all the negative changes made by the former government to our labour legislation. While this bill seeks to restore the rights C-62 stripped from public sector unions under Stephen Harper's tenure, Bill C-62 falls short of addressing some elements of Bills C-4 and C-59. I am referring to Division 5 of Part 3 of Bill C-4.

The Liberal government seems to be taking half-measures in an area where expectations are monumental. If we are to truly do away with the Harper government's anti-labour legacy, Bill C-62 must do better, first by re-establishing the provisions of the Canada Labour Code respecting Canadians' right to refuse dangerous work, such as changing the definition of "danger", now limited in scope to situations of imminent threat.

*Government Orders*

We are also concerned about another point that Bill C-62 ignores: the removal of health and safety officers from the process of refusing dangerous work. As it stands now, the employer assesses the safety of the work, and the worker must appeal directly to the Minister of Labour. The minister can simply refuse to investigate if he or she deems that the matter is trivial or vexatious, or that the employee's refusal is in bad faith. This measure implemented by the Harper government should be permanently struck down by Bill C-62.

Lastly, we believe that we should take this opportunity to re-establish a federal minimum wage and to reinstate the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act repealed by the Conservatives in 2013.

We also need to advance gender equality in the federal public service. That is why Bill C-62 should include a proactive federal legislative measure on pay equity in order to counter the effect of labour market forces on women's wages.

The government claims that Bill C-62 demonstrates its commitment to fair collective bargaining for public servants. However, the exclusions to collective bargaining in Bill C-7 show that the Liberals have not always defended fair collective bargaining.

The government must commit to eliminating the exclusions in Bill C-7 in order to respect the right of members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to meet and bargain collectively, just as public servants do.

● (1130)

That is why, in light of all the previous explanations, we deplore Bill C-62's lack of ambition. This lack of ambition restricts the scope of a bill that deserves more than what the Liberals are proposing.

Our disappointment appears to be shared by the national president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. She recently called on the government to do more than simply introduce a bill to correct the Conservative bills aimed at restricting public servants' bargaining rights.

It is imperative that we continue to work on this bill. We must go much further and take advantage of its full potential. I explained which measures should be retained, which measures need to be taken much further, and which measures should be eliminated. The Liberal government really needs to repeal all of the Conservative measures.

This morning, I heard the President of the Treasury Board mention some lofty principles. If the Liberals wish to follow these principles, they must repeal all of the anti-labour measures the Conservatives introduced. We must take advantage of this opportunity.

We know that this bill was introduced in the fall of 2016, which was quite some time ago. People have very high expectations. The federal public service is dedicated to serving Canadians. We just marked the second anniversary of the problems with the Phoenix pay system. We need to take Bill C-62 as far as we can in order to resolve these problems that we have been grappling with for far too long.

We have amendments to propose. I outlined the measures that we want to implement. I hope that we will all be able to work together so that, when Bill C-62 passes, we can all proudly say that we accomplished our mission and that we implemented proper working

conditions for federal public servants, working conditions in which they can feel secure. I hope that we can allay the concerns related to the Phoenix pay system and that public servants will have working conditions that will allow them to do their jobs properly.

We know that front-line work is demanding. That is what everyday life is like in some departments. Those employees listen to Canadians who are in difficult situations and who come to them for help or to get their file sorted out. We are therefore asking federal public servants to do very demanding work.

Here, we pass bills. The next step is to implement them. We need to make sure that public servants feel that we parliamentarians here in the House are collaborating to provide them with the working conditions they need to do their job properly.

Budgetary considerations have been mentioned. All elected officials, at all levels of government, always need to ensure their decisions stay within budget. As I explained, a number of measures cost nothing. As we know, employees who are off sick are not even replaced, so their sick leave does not cost us anything.

For this reason, we are eager to collaborate in perfecting and completing this bill, which will officially reverse the anti-union measures of the past.

Bills C-5 and C-34 have been languishing on the Order Paper since they were tabled by this government. We hope that merging them with Bill C-62 is a sign that the government is finally ready to move forward.

That is why I want to make an appeal, an appeal to set partisanship aside and implement an infallible law that genuinely protects the rights of all workers, an appeal for teamwork and collaboration to make sure the proposed amendments I have presented here can be considered and approved.

● (1135)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that my colleague is in support of this piece of legislation.

One of the things that Bill C-62 does, or attempts to undo, is with respect to a provision in Bill C-59 of the former government that actually went ahead and removed the ability to bank sick days from federal employees. To add insult to injury, the Conservatives also took the liberty of banking this savings through the decreased liability into the budget of 2015, before even passing Bill C-59.

The current Minister of Finance, upon being elected, immediately revised that by removing that provision to make certain that no such banking of lost liabilities in the budget would occur until there is a collective bargaining process that establishes that.

*Government Orders*

First, does the member agree with the position that the former government took on this by not respecting the collective bargaining process and immediately putting this into the budget before the bill had even passed? Second, does she agree with the position that the current Minister of Finance has taken with respect to removing those provisions?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague about the way the former Conservative government operated. That is why I talked about attitude in my speech. It seems that the entire premise of the employer-employee relationship was compromised. That is why, with Bill C-62, we must seize the opportunity to adopt a new attitude, a new relationship with employees. The issue of sick leave is essential. We in the House know this because we are all managers. We all have work teams.

I studied public administration, and we were told that presenteeism was a bigger problem than absenteeism. A sick employee who goes to work is just not effective. It is a well-known fact that, most of the time, when an employee takes sick leave to recover and be able to work better the next day, that employee is not replaced. The work piles up while the employee is absent. However, when sick employees do come in, their work also piles up because, in addition to not being able to take care of themselves, they are not able to do their work properly. Sick leaves are therefore an essential budget measure for any good manager.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about something really important here, which is the people who serve our country every single day. I know that one of the challenges that so many of our public service workers are facing right now is the Phoenix pay system.

In my riding I have hundreds of cases of people struggling to make ends meet because they are simply not being paid. I think that all of the House recognizes the great dedication these folks have to our country and to the service they provide because they keep showing up day after day. One case in particular was where a hard-working person came in who was only paid half her wage for working full time, yet after months of this situation she continues to come in, day after day.

We are talking about something fundamental, which is protecting workers rights. It is about looking at how we will support that and fixing something that the previous government did that was a huge detriment across this country around undermining workers.

However, here we are in this situation where we have the current government, on one side, changing some of the issues that the previous government brought forward, while at the same time having this process in place. After almost two years of people talking of not being paid for their work, they are still doing the work. I hope that all the members in this place will remember to thank the people who serve our country.

I would like to ask the member if she can talk about how these two different approaches can happen and what the government needs to do to really remedy some of these issues.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about two different approaches, as we clearly heard in the House this morning. On the one hand, we heard members say that they were going to help workers and, on the other hand, we heard my Conservative colleagues say that this is instead a bill that caters to union bosses instead of workers.

I will point out that workers are at work, providing a service every day. To be represented, they appoint a union representative who negotiates with the government. The people who sit across from the government to negotiate collective agreements represent all public service workers. They are given a mandate by the union members. Therefore, it is wrong to say that we are not really helping workers.

Let us be clear: creating the right conditions for negotiating fair and equitable collective agreements helps all workers, and the people negotiating with the government represent those workers. They are duly mandated to negotiate on their behalf.

As we know, it is by coming together collectively to defend our rights that we make progress in our society. That is why, at the start of my speech, I spoke about the pillars of our democracy, that ability to come together to defend our rights.

Regarding Phoenix, I will close by saying that, in addition to harming workers, it harms even retirees in my riding, people who dedicated their lives to the federal public service and who must now mortgage their homes because of the problems with Phoenix.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am really grateful for this opportunity to talk again about the importance of the people who work for this country every single day. We have to come back to the core issue here. This is a good step in the right direction and we are happy to support the bill, but there are some definite gaps that were left out of dealing with the issues that the previous government left for so many workers across Canada.

One that is important is about safety. If we look at the Canada Labour Code, under Bill C-4, division 5 of part 3, public service workers lost the right to refuse unsafe work. When we put our faith in workers to go out and do the hard work that they do for all Canadians, we must make sure they can refuse work that is potentially very unsafe. They are the experts. They are the ones who have been doing this job. They understand what the risks are. To not give them that ability to refuse unsafe work is really devastating for workers and something that the government did not campaign on.

I am wondering if the member could share with the House why the government would not take the next step to make sure that we promote the fundamental rights of men and women in this country who serve all Canadians.



*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important issue, as we have been saying since this discussion started.

This is indeed a step in the right direction, but the government, as is often the case, is not going far enough. Amending the definition of “danger” is certainly important, because according to the Conservatives' definition, there was not really any such thing as danger. The new definition is clearer for sure.

However, removing health and safety officers from the process of refusing unsafe work is something really important that we have to keep because otherwise things become arbitrary. The way this is set up, there is no real way to assess a situation accurately. That is why we need to do more to give workers all the tools they need to really work safely and avoid unsafe situations.

• (1145)

[*English*]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this occasion to rise in support of Bill C-62.

I wish to note I will be splitting my time with my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

The bill would repeal collective bargaining changes for the public service passed in 2013.

[*Translation*]

It would also repeal legislation that would have allowed a government to override the collective bargaining process and unilaterally impose a short-term disability plan. Bill C-62 does this by combining Bills C-5 and C-34.

[*English*]

It is important to note that combining these two bills would make no substantive changes compared to the earlier bills. It would simply incorporate the adjustments necessary to combine proposals regarding sick leave, collective bargaining, and essential services for the federal public service into one piece of legislation moving forward.

I will begin with the contentious changes made in 2013.

[*Translation*]

Previously, bargaining agents had a say in determining which services were declared essential. However, the 2013 legislation took this away and put the right to determine essential services exclusively in the hands of the employer.

[*English*]

In addition, bargaining agents were no longer given the chance to determine which dispute resolution process they wished to use should the parties reach an impasse in bargaining. Instead, conciliation or strike was established as a default dispute resolution mechanism.

[*Translation*]

Moreover, arbitration boards and other labour bodies were required to give more weight to some factors over others when setting or recommending appropriate levels of compensation for

public servants. These and other changes were made without consultation with our public sector partners.

[*English*]

The government does not support such an approach. We believe that the right of collective bargaining is vital to protecting the rights of Canadian workers, and we believe that effective collective bargaining involves discussion, negotiation, and compromise.

[*Translation*]

We must not roll back the fundamental labour rights that unions have worked so hard to secure. Instead, we need to ensure that workers are free to organize, bargain collectively in good faith, and work in safe environments. To that end, in January 2016, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour introduced legislation to repeal Bills C-377 and C-525.

[*English*]

The legislation would remove provisions that make it harder for unions to be certified and easier for them to be decertified. It would also amend the Income Tax Act to remove the onerous and redundant requirement that labour organizations and labour trusts provide specific information annually to the minister of national revenue. This includes information on non-labour activities that are then made available to the public.

[*Translation*]

As hon. members are well aware, legislation is already in place to ensure that unions make financial information available and are accountable to their members.

Section 110 of the Canada Labour Code requires unions to provide financial statements to their members upon request and free of charge, rendering these additional reporting requirements unnecessary.

[*English*]

The bill before us today is the latest in a series of actions the government has taken to demonstrate its commitment to bargaining in good faith with public service bargaining agents. It fulfills a commitment we made to repeal legislation that had provided the government with the authority to establish and modify terms and conditions of employment related to the sick leave of employees, to establish a short-term disability plan outside collective bargaining, and to modify long-term disability programs in the core public administration. It would also restore the labour relations regime that existed prior to 2013.

[*Translation*]

It also supports collaborative management-union relations. Unions play a vital role in protecting workers' rights and growing the middle class, and we respect unions and the members they represent.

*Government Orders*

• (1150)

[English]

In the case of the federal public service, I am talking about the people who protect the health of Canadians by inspecting our food to make sure it is safe for us to eat. I am talking about the people who ensure that Canadians have access to safe and effective health products by monitoring everything from medical devices to prescription medications. It is public service employees across this country who administer income support programs, such as old age security benefits, that provide Canadian seniors with an important source of income.

[Translation]

Our public service employees come from all walks of life. They have an incredible range of expertise and experience that the government relies on to provide services to Canadians across the country and around the world.

If we truly respect our public service employees, we cannot support an approach that disregards or fails to respect the right to bargain collectively.

[English]

We want public service employees to be proud of the work they do. We want the public service to be a place that attracts our best and brightest minds.

[Translation]

We need to think about college and university students. We want them to see the public service not only as the perfect place to launch their careers, but also as the perfect place to build a country. All they have to do is look at the amazing things public servants are doing.

[English]

Recently, public servants supported the government's goal of helping Canadians achieve a safe, secure, and dignified retirement by working co-operatively with their provincial and territorial counterparts so that Canada's finance ministers could strengthen the Canada pension plan, yes, the enhanced Canada pension plan.

In 2016, they answered the call to help their fellow citizens displaced by the Fort McMurray wildfires.

[Translation]

They worked tirelessly to integrate tens of thousands of Syrian refugees into Canadian society.

[English]

When we encourage federal employees to give fearless advice, when we trust them to make responsible decisions, and when we respect them for their skill and expertise, these are the kinds of results that are possible.

Bill C-62 is strong proof of our commitment to restore a culture of respect for and within the public service.

[Translation]

I urge all members who believe in the principles of fairness and respect to join us in supporting Bill C-62.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, prior to the last election, met with and listened to a large number of public servants and a number of individuals that were leading the bargaining process. What we found was that when the Conservatives brought forward Bill C-59 in the insensitive manner they did, there was a great deal of resentment toward the government and a great deal of harm done to labour relations. The Prime Minister acknowledged that a Liberal government would commit to repealing those actions by the Conservative government. That, in good part, is what today's legislation is all about. Bill C-62 is the result of a campaign commitment made by the Prime Minister and this government.

I am wondering if my colleague could tell us how important it is that we fulfill that commitment, therefore re-establishing a healthier relationship with labour.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, one of our platform commitments was to re-establish a relationship with both public sector unions and private sector unions, from coast to coast to coast, based on trust, faith, and collective bargaining rights for all workers and those that had recently been certified. We have done that.

We have repealed Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. We have put provisions in place. We re-established a balance between bargaining agents for both the employer and the employee. That is something I am proud of. That is something my constituents back home in Vaughan—Woodbridge are proud of. We brought balance back to the collective bargaining process.

We need to ensure that when collective bargaining takes place, it takes place not on a unilateral basis, as my Conservative colleagues liked to do and what they imposed when they were in government, but in a fair and balanced manner, where people come together and negotiate an agreement that is a win for both sides.

I am proud that our government has fulfilled those commitments. I am proud that our government continues to work with both public sector unions and private sector unions to ensure that we have a strong middle class, because when bargaining agents are able to come together, negotiate freely, and negotiate a great deal, the middle class benefits and the Canadian economy benefits.

• (1155)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, one thing we often take for granted is the fine work our civil servants do for us in a range of areas. I know that I will have the opportunity to speak about that shortly, but I wonder if my colleague could reinforce some of the important roles our public service plays for all Canadians. In fact, our civil service is respected around the world for what it does. Could the member provide his comments on the quality of work provided by our civil service?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, our civil service, in two words, is world class. Our civil service can be looked to by any country in the world on the delivery of the programs we have for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. There is the guaranteed income supplement and the Canada pension plan that is sent monthly to pensioners across this country, those who really built this country we call home and are so proud to be part of. There is old age security, as I mentioned in my speech. We have our trade negotiators and people working abroad for us in consulates across the world. We have folks all over this country who go to work every day and do the good work Canadians expect them to do and expect us to do here in this House.

It is great to see that our government has returned some balance and some pride to the civil service. Civil servants are not being condescended to, looked down on, or having unilateral measures imposed such as those by the government that was in power for 10 years. They are able to collectively bargain with the employer regarding the terms of their benefits, such as their security, pensions, sick leave, and things they really care about. When they go to work, they do not have to worry about it. They can focus on the great job they do day in and day out delivering those programs Canadians care about and depend on.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was a little disappointed with the Conservatives' response to the President of the Treasury Board. My colleague across the way laughs at that comment. I am sure she will take it seriously when I expand upon why I am disappointed.

When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, he sent a very negative message to Canada's labour unions. Whether it was through the front door with Bill C-59 or, and I know some will take objection to this, or through the back door by a couple of private members' bills, they all took swipes at unions and the union movement, underestimating the important and valuable contributions that public and private unions played in Canadian society.

If we want to grow our economy and our middle class, we have to be supportive of the fine work unions do. Today, the Conservative Party is using the old-style leadership of Stephen Harper. There does not seem to be any change. Some might think that is funny, but I do not think Canadians do. I think Canadians see no difference between the current leadership of the Conservative Party and that of Stephen Harper.

I would remind the House that it was Stephen Harper and his ideas that were defeated. When we look at Stephen Harper's policies with respect to labour relations and the continuation of what appears to be the Conservative policies today, I am not encouraged. I am disappointed that the Conservatives will vote against this legislation.

Let us remember what is at the core of the legislation. We are repealing some changes that were made through Bill C-59. Bill C-59 was highly offensive legislation that was brought in by Stephen Harper. We know that organized labour resisted it and saw it as offensive legislation, as did we when we were the third party in the House. In fact, labour organizations were taking the Government of Canada to court. After the legislation received royal assent, public unions were withdrawing from negotiations.

The Conservative Government of Canada did not even blink. It felt, for whatever reason, that it wanted to pick a fight with our public servants, at a great cost. Unions were pulling out of negotiations. Organized labour was taking the government to court, not only in Canada but to international labour courts.

When we came to office, we inherited that the type of labour relations. After the last federal election, 0% of federal employees were under an agreement with organized negotiating units. Today, after just two years of good faith negotiations, 90% of our federal workers who are under negotiating units now have collective agreements in place. It went from 0% to 90%. Tens of thousands of workers today finally have an agreement, compared to 0% in the Stephen Harper era when the Conservatives did not respect the importance of our civil servants.

I have heard others talk about Canada's civil service. I have the deepest amount of respect for the fine work it does. I have recognized that in the past, and at times it needs to be reinforced.

● (1200)

International public service agencies, in other words, public servants from around the world look at what Canada is doing and how we foster a very healthy public service. I have had the opportunity to meet with many individuals in other countries. They are envious of the professionalism of our civil service, how corruption is marginalized, how services are provided, and the relationship between politicians and civil servants. I really appreciate that relationship and the professional nature of it.

I am sure all MPs will acknowledge how much we depend on those civil servants to provide the many different services that are of utmost importance to all Canadians. When we talk about our civil service, or public service, sometimes it is good to put a face on it, the public servants we deal with on a day in, day out basis. Canadians need to understand and appreciate that they touch virtually every aspect of our lives.

We can talk about the Canada Revenue Agency. We often hear about the importance of dealing with tax fairness. The government has invested well over a half-billion dollars to look at ways to recuperate taxes from individuals and corporations trying to avoid paying them. Who are the people driving that tax recovery? In good part, they are our civil servants.

One of the branches that either I or my constituency office works with on a daily basis, Monday to Saturday, is the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. We have dealt with a number of civil servants, who play an important role. Every year, hundreds and thousands of new residents come to Canada. That is no easy feat. This year, I believe we will receive in excess of 300,000 new landed immigrants. We have a civil service that can handle those types of numbers, and do it in a very professional manner.

*Government Orders*

We have social programs. I often talk about some of the fine work that has been done, whether it the work of the Minister of Finance, or the minister responsible for human resources or seniors, work such as increasing things like our guaranteed income supplement. We have the old age supplement, or OAS, program. These senior pension programs are all administered by civil servants. We have many other programs of a social nature. We have civil servants who are responsible for working with many other jurisdictions, provinces, and so forth to deliver the type of health care system Canadians want and deserve.

There is a change in government and through that we have seen real change with labour relations. I am very proud of that. I am very proud of the fact that we have an understanding that in order to grow our economy, a benefit for all citizens, we need to invest in our public service. Part of that is re-establishing a relationship of respect, which public servants can expect from this government. We value the immense work and contributions they make to the everyday quality of living for all Canadians.

I hope to expand on this if I get a question or two.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I find it very nice every time you try to say the name of my riding because even in Quebec we have trouble saying it.

I thank my Liberal colleague across the way for his speech. I think he really misses Mr. Harper because, from hearing him speak, he talks more about Mr. Harper than about his own party. Mr. Harper is in this room today, because the Liberals miss him.

All joking aside, every time the Liberals talk about two backdoor bills, I must say it shocks me a bit. They claim to be the great defenders of workers. However, for the Liberals, there are two worlds: ministers and others. Each member here in the house is equal. When we claim to defend employees, we should treat everybody equally. The difference between them and us is that we work for real people. I have nothing against people who fight for unions. However, I do not. I will work, first and foremost, for workers.

I would like to know why you always differentiate between the elite and others.

• (1210)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would remind the hon. member that she is to address the Chair, not the government or individual members.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I believe the member said that Stephen Harper was here today. In good part, she is right with respect to the current leader of the official opposition and the many Harperites who still sit on the Conservative benches. You can keep on that course. You can continue to be out of touch with Canadians, and I wish you well going forward with that line.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the parliamentary secretary as well. I just finished indicating that every question and comment should be address to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has a few minutes.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, you would think I would know better, so I will try to keep it more on track.

The difference between this government and the previous government is quite clear. One of the best ways I can describe that is by indicating how many civil servants were under a valid agreement negotiated with our union bargaining units. The answer is zero. Within two years, tens of thousands now have agreements. Ninety per cent of our civil servants with bargaining units now have an agreement in place. We have done that because there is a higher sense of trust and faith in negotiations. It goes both ways. There has to be a strong element of respect, and the union finally has that.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North stated that in the last two years his government had worked so hard to bring about this bill, and to make life better for bureaucrats. However, while the Liberals have worked so hard to put forward the bill, they have not fixed Phoenix. Just this morning we learned that 193,000 bureaucrats in Canada were touched by Phoenix. Some people still do not have any pay. Some people have lost their houses.

How can that colleague say that for the last two years the Liberals have worked hard for bureaucrats to help them in their lives, and yet they have been unable to fix Phoenix? It is outrageous.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the Conservative government had fired hundreds of human resources individuals who would have assisted us in implementing the Phoenix process, a Phoenix system that the former government brought in. The minister responsible for the public service has made it a priority to ensure our civil servants are paid. We are investing millions of dollars to try to fix this system. We are working with public servants to try to make this problem go away. We want our civil servants to be paid. They are entitled to it. We will continue to work with unions and others who have a vested interest in this to try to get this system working properly. It is a high priority for this government.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am always pleased to take part in the debate in the House. First, I would like you to know that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Beauport—Limoilou, who is a strong champion of Canada's two official languages. I thank him for the exceptional work that he does for us and for the Constitution.

*Government Orders*

Today, we are discussing Bill C-62. My Liberal colleague spoke about the big difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals. That big difference is the code of ethics. The Conservative Party could never be accused of not behaving ethically. One of our ministers had such respect for ethics that she had to resign over a \$16 glass of orange juice. If some people across the way find that funny, maybe it is time they asked their Prime Minister to reimburse taxpayers for his trip, which was deemed illegal by the Ethics Commissioner. Maybe the man I see laughing on the other side of the House should read all the newspapers published this week.

If the Liberal government opposite truly wants to defend public service workers, it should begin by putting an end to its outrageous expenses. When the Prime Minister travels and 400 bottles of wine are purchased on the aircraft, the taxpayers pay for that. It makes no sense. Whether Conservative, New Democrat, Liberal, Block, whatever else, it is unacceptable to make taxpayers pay for 400 bottles of wine on an elite trip on a government aircraft.

It is also unacceptable that the Prime Minister, who was found guilty not two, not three times, but four times by the Ethics Commissioner, refuses to answer questions in the House and repay taxpayers. It is outrageous.

Then, there are the two omissions in Bill C-62. While we debate this bill, thousands of workers are still without pay because of Phoenix. There are members here who are prepared to provide evidence to show that, beginning in 2016, giving the green light was deemed counterproductive. It was not us who did it, it was the Liberals. They have been in office for two years and they have spent two years accusing others and refusing to assume their responsibilities.

Accordingly, I will obviously be opposing Bill C-62 for two reasons. First and foremost, I am much closer to ordinary workers than union leaders who fill their own pockets. We still do not know where that money goes, and that bothers me. It also bothers me that people across the House claim to be great defenders of workers and then table this type of bill that aims primarily to thank the unions for spending so much money to defeat the Conservatives in the last election. In my opinion, this is a terrible bill, as it serves to thank the friends of the party in office, a party with so many friends that new lists keep popping up, whether on the subject of marijuana or these abhorrent unions.

● (1215)

This party is becoming truly vile. We are used to it since Gomery; this is nothing new.

I will get back to Bill C-62. If the Liberals truly want to help people, if it is really in their DNA to help average people, maybe it is high time that they solve the Phoenix problem.

People have come to my riding, Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, because they work for the federal government in the neighbouring riding of Beauport—Limoilou and have not been paid for eight or nine months. People who have been overpaid have also come to see me. They are trying to return the money, but they do not know where to go, because no one will answer their questions. There are actual people living through this every day.

As the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, I will not support Bill C-62 because it goes against ordinary people, the middle class, and it helps the big union bosses more than average people. For that reason, I will be voting against this bill.

● (1220)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's intervention, and there was little substance that had to do with the issue at hand. In fact, this morning, all we have been hearing about from the other side of the House is Phoenix. We know the reality of the situation is that the previous Conservative government fired 700 compensation advisers whose direct jobs were responsible for what Phoenix was overtaking. It is like leading me to the front door of a house that is burning behind me and saying that I can always go back in if I want, but that is literally impossible because we are too far down the road.

Let us talk about the actual legislation, because that is clearly what the other side is avoiding. Bill C-62 specifically seeks to make changes to Bill C-59, introduced by the previous government, which had to do with removing a federal employee's ability to bank sick days. To make matters even worse, before that bill was even passed, they put it into the budget for 2015 as a decreased liability.

I want to ask the member across the way if she thinks that is a responsible and fair way to be negotiating and working with our federal employees and their unions.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I want to point something out to him. Between February and April 2016, the Liberals laid off 300 people, at the same time as they gave the go-ahead for Phoenix. We have all the evidence here to prove that this is not a time problem. The system is just no good. We have been trying to table that evidence for months.

I can hear him saying no, but the reality is that, yes, it is true. The Liberals need to stop accusing the Conservatives when they are unable to look at themselves in the mirror and admit that they made a mistake. They made a mistake because when they gave the go-ahead for Phoenix, they also put 300 people out of work. Today, ordinary Canadians are paying the price. People are losing their homes. Some have never been paid, while others are being paid too much and are unable to pay it back because there is no customer service. Phoenix is a Liberal mistake and they need to own up to that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** No, Madam Speaker, that is not the case, although that is the picture the Conservatives obviously would like to paint. In reality, what happened is that these 300 employees had already been assigned to new tasks and 400 people had been hired and moved into Miramichi where a new call centre was going to take this over. To suggest that we could have gone back at the beginning of 2016 on a plan that had been implemented for years by the previous government is absolutely ludicrous and is not representative of what actually happened.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

*Government Orders*

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I would like to remind the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix that she will have a chance to respond and that she must wait her turn.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Madam Speaker, the Liberals had the opportunity to hold off on implementing the program, as they had been advised to do. The Conservative Party may have considered it, but it never went forward. It needs to be said because it is the truth. Members opposite should stop accusing us because we are not the ones who did it. When we make mistakes, we are able to admit to them. However, I clearly see that the Liberals are unable to admit to theirs.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in this august House for the first time in 2018. We were elected in 2015 and here we are in 2018 already. Life goes so fast. I would like to wish all of the citizens of Beauport—Limoilou, many of whom are tuning in today, a very happy New Year, health, prosperity and happiness. I am very happy to have seen them throughout Parliament's winter break and during door-to-door events and various activities, including the Christmas gala at my constituency office. I thank them for attending in large numbers.

It is unfortunate that the member across the way has left, but in February 2016, the Gartner report said quite clearly that the Phoenix system had major problems and should not be implemented. The report also featured some important recommendations that would have allowed us to avoid the considerable problems now facing public servants, if only the Liberal government had shown as much wisdom as we have, and followed those recommendations and if it had not given the project the green light in February 2016.

I would like to respond to certain allegations by my Liberal colleagues today, but I must first say that Bill C-62 is an outright abdication by the executive for electoral gains. In 2015, we Conservatives were forced to call an election four months early because the major unions in Canada would not stop making electoral expenditures day after day, week after week, to help either the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party, because those parties had apparently given them what they wanted. They absolutely wanted to defeat the Conservatives and were spending millions of dollars on advertising against us on television, on the radio and in print media. That is why it was the longest election in Canadian history. We were honourable and we had to respond to those daily frontal media attacks from the unions. We therefore triggered the election campaign to be able to use electoral funds ourselves to respond to those attacks.

Without even realizing it, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge accurately described this bill when he said that his government is working hand-in-hand with the major unions. He could not have said it better. With Bill C-62, the government is not only abdicating its responsibilities to the benefit of big union bosses, who claim to be great leaders who want to protect workers, but it is also returning the

favour to the major unions that supported the Liberal Party in 2015 to bring down one of the best governments in the history of Canada. In 10 years, the previous Conservative government got Canada through the biggest economic crisis in world history since the Great Depression in 1929 and 1930. In short, it is shameful that these unions interfered in an election campaign without the support of their members.

Furthermore, I am fed up of hearing our colleague from Winnipeg North portray himself as the paragon of universal virtue, as if the Liberal government was the only one to have good intentions and to work for the well-being of public servants, for Canadians and for humanity. It is completely ridiculous. Every Canadian government, be it Liberal or Conservative, works for the well-being of this country. Will they one day stop harping on about these platitudes, telling us that Conservatives do not work for the well-being of all Canadians or all of humanity? It is utter nonsense, and I am starting to get really fed up. It is extreme arrogance. We respect public servants, and that is why we had two objectives when we introduced Bills C-377 and C-525.

• (1230)

First, we wanted to ensure the sustainability of public service pensions. If there is one thing we can do to show respect for our public servants, who work very hard for Canada, and keep the government apparatus running smoothly, it is to ensure that, when the day comes, they will retire with honour and dignity, and have access to a sustainable, vital pension that really exists.

When we came to power after the era of Paul Martin and the Liberals from 1990 to 2004, we had to face the facts. Not only had millions of sick days been banked, but we could foresee some major deficits in the public service pension fund in the following decades. Together, both of these things threaten not only existing pension funds as they now stand, but also access to these pension funds for any public servant retiring in the next 10, 20, 30 or 40 years.

We have so much respect for public servants that we made difficult decisions for them. They are not the executive, the government is. We made decisions to ensure that they could retire with dignity when the time came. That was Bill C-377. There was also Bill C-525 to promote democracy in labour organizations and unions in Canada.

This House is one of the most democratic in the world, if not the most democratic. Is it any wonder that we did everything in our power to further promote democracy within unions?

It is unfathomable that one of the first things the Liberals did after arriving on Parliament Hill was to try to repeal the provision of Bill C-525 that allows for a secret vote at union meetings. There are sometimes thousands of people at union meetings. There is intimidation. There is strong-arming. Things get rowdy. Not all Canadians have the courage to voice their opinion, as they may be afraid of being bullied. Have we not been talking for weeks and months about the many types of bullying in Canadian society? In the world of unions, there is bullying. It is no secret. It is a huge factor.

*Government Orders*

We were working not only for public servants, but also for workers. We wanted to give them a secret ballot so they could vote transparently and without fear of recrimination to determine the direction of their union leadership and the decisions made.

With the Liberals, we are dealing with a party that is completely blind. It is blind to the sustainability of pension funds in the public sector and sometimes the private sector. It is even blind to the sustainability of insurance for seniors in Canada. We made a decision that I found to be very interesting as a young man. I am now 31 years old and was 27 at the time. We decided to raise the age of eligibility for old age security from 65 to 67. That was probably one of the most courageous decisions for an OECD country, for a G7 country. It was clearly something that needed to be done.

When he was a Bay Street tycoon in Toronto, the Minister of Finance wrote a fantastic book in which he said that this was exactly what needed to be done and that Mr. Harper's government had made a very good decision.

The member for Winnipeg North should set a better example for all his colleagues. He should stop being arrogant, truly work for public servants, resolve the problems with Phoenix, and stop claiming he has the moral high ground.

We worked for workers with Bill C-525 to give them a secret ballot. We worked with public servants to ensure the sustainability of their pension funds with Bill C-377.

I will close by saying that Bill C-62 is an abdication by the executive in favour of the major unions. The purpose of this bill is to reward them in order to obtain electoral gains in 2019.

•(1235)

[English]

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I heard the phrase “an abdication of executive responsibility” used frequently in the previous speech. The abdication of executive responsibility was the complete absence of collective bargaining agreements with dozens of federal unions and thousands of federal employees. The lack of a structured workplace and comprehensive pay structure, work structure, and a health and safety set of conditions is the very definition of an abdication of responsibility, an abdication of duty.

Can the member opposite explain why the previous government refused to negotiate, and failed to reach deals, failed the structure of the workplace, and projected workers into the abyss by refusing to sign one single collective agreement when it left office?

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, democracy entails the competition of interest groups. We would like it to be different, but that is how it works. We have to put interest groups and competition on a level playing field in this country. As much as I respect them, bureaucrats are part of an interest group. Most Canadians will never have the wealth in their life that bureaucrats will have, for example, with their retirement pension, which is amazing. Most Canadians in my riding will not have a retirement pension from the government.

We were executively responsible. We told the unions of the bureaucrats how it was going to work to ensure that a public pension

plan would be a household phrase for every Canadian in 40 years, because Canadians put a lot of money into those pension plans. People who work in shops and pizzerias, and only earn 12 bucks an hour, pay for public pensions.

Therefore, we as executives have to make sure it is equitable for all Canadians. That is why we did it, and that is being responsible.

[Translation]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague is quite fond of constitutional questions. I have one for him.

In a recent decision, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Saskatchewan's essential services law as unconstitutional. That law contains provisions that are similar to those in Bill C-34 and Bill C-62.

Does my colleague agree that it is important to have essential services legislation that respects the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada and, accordingly, that we should update the measures of the previous Conservative government?

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. The three branches of power in Canada have equal footing with respect to the interpretation of the Constitution, despite what many people might think.

The legislative branch and the executive branch have every constitutional right to decide whether to move forward or act in accordance with the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada. Under the notwithstanding clause, section 33 of the Canadian Constitution, the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada may not be followed. The Jean Chrétien government was skilled at that. When that government disagreed with a Supreme Court ruling, it would bring back a bill and insert a preamble explaining that the Supreme Court had completely misunderstood the purpose of the bill.

For example, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that it was unconstitutional to ban tobacco advertising at Montreal's Formula 1 because that infringed on private companies' freedom of expression. The Jean Chrétien government reintroduced the legislation saying that the Supreme Court of Canada had erred in its constitutional interpretation.#

Thus, the legislative branch has the right to ignore the Supreme Court of Canada. Competition between the three branches of power guarantees the constitutional supremacy of our great federation.

•(1240)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in the interest of the member helping his constituents get a pension, will he then support legislation that makes it easier for his constituents, those employees who do not have a pension, to unionize, so they have the ability to bargain collectively with their employer?

Will he support helping his constituents have the ability to unionize?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I really do not see the logic in the question. Everybody in Canada has the right to unionize. It is part of Canadian law. If they want to create a union, they should go for it. If they want to create a political party, they should go for it. If they want to do something in Canada, all they need is courage, energy, and take action.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House today and speak to Bill C-62, an act to amend the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act and other acts. This legislation and the subject matter with which it deals is not only important to me as a parliamentarian and a legislator, but also professionally. I was fortunate enough to spend 16 years working as director of legal resources for Teamsters Union Local 31, where I represented workers and the union in all facets of labour relations and human resources. I am well aware of the very strong need to have fair and balanced labour legislation in this country.

To that end, New Democrats are very pleased to see this legislation introduced and will be supporting the government as it moves the legislation through the House. As with all pieces of legislation from the Liberals, it is not exactly what we would like to see and it does not go quite far enough, but it definitely goes a large distance in re-establishing that balance in Canadian labour law that Canadians by a large majority want to see.

Specifically, Bill C-62 is aimed at repealing two blatantly anti-labour pieces of legislation that were introduced by the former Harper government. That was division 20 of Bill C-59 and Bill C-4. The first of these, the former Bill C-59, sought to unilaterally impose an inferior disability and sick leave management system on public servants, an unwarranted, unjustified, and significant attack on the rights of public sector workers to freely and collectively bargain their benefits. Bill C-4 would have drastically changed the rules for collective bargaining within the public service, giving the government full control over union rights such as the right to strike and the right to arbitration. The government would have also determined what positions would be considered essential, again, unilaterally.

The New Democrats fought vigorously against the government's attempt to introduce that legislation in the previous Parliament and we have fought vigorously in this Parliament to repeal the Conservatives' move to take those regressive steps.

To examine these provisions in a bit more detail, a key provision in the collective agreement of any worker, and in particular public service workers, is sick leave, which allows full-time workers, in the case of the public sector, 15 days per year of leave for use in case of illness or injury. The previous Conservative government was determined to unilaterally change that provision regardless of the wishes or desires of the majority of employees whose benefit it was, by reducing the number of sick days from 15 to six; eliminating entirely all accumulated banked sick days, in other words, wiping out accumulated benefits that public servants had accumulated for years; and imposing a short-term disability plan for federal public servants.

I pause here to say that many people in workplaces in Canada do have short-term disability plans. Others have accumulated sick days and each of those systems has its pros and cons. The point, however, is that in a unionized environment the way to come to a

determination about what those benefits are is through collective bargaining. It is the employer and the union sitting at a table engaging in free collective bargaining and doing the inevitable trade-offs so that they come to a negotiated settlement. It is not by one side, in this case the employer, bringing down the unilateral hammer to impose its will on the other side regardless of the wishes or interests of the other side, but that is what the Conservatives did in the last Parliament.

The previous government also claimed that this change would save \$900 million despite evidence to the contrary. According to the 2014 parliamentary budget officer:

...the incremental cost of paid sick leave was not fiscally material and did not represent material costs for departments in the [core public administration].

● (1245)

In practice, of course, the PBO found that most employees who call in sick are not replaced, resulting in no incremental cost to departments. The punitive reason given by the previous Conservative government, that it would save money, once examined by an independent officer of Parliament, was found to be completely unsubstantiated.

I am going to pause here and just say there is something else the previous Conservative government said would save about that same amount of money, and that was the introduction of the Phoenix pay system. The Conservative government laid off, I think it was approximately 800 or 900 payroll workers across this country in the federal civil service, and instead bought a computer program that was developed by an outside private contractor. It then concentrated a much smaller workforce in New Brunswick to handle payroll issues for the entire country.

At that time the Conservatives, with their ideological mantra of privatization and smaller government said we would save money. How did that work out? Here we are, three or four years later, and the federal public payroll system is in utter chaos. Hundreds of thousands of public servants have had errors in their pay, have not been paid at all, or have been overpaid. Any time a federal public servant changes their status, whether they move up a category to fill in for someone on a temporary basis or to take a promotion, their pay inevitably gets completely confused.

We now know that it will cost somewhere in the billions of dollars to repair this colossal, irresponsible undertaking. Conservatives always try to convince the Canadian public that they are best managers of the public purse. I hope Canadians remember this. Here are examples where the Conservatives made moves, punitively, to save money that ended up costing taxpayers billions of dollars and implementing decisions that actually made the situation worse.



*Government Orders*

I am going to pause here for a moment. I want to talk a little about unionization. My friends on the Liberal side of the House are standing up and strenuously advocating for the right to unionize. I heard my friends in the Conservative Party asking what stops anybody. In this country, what stops people from unionizing is the law.

It is currently the law in Canada that employees who work on Parliament Hill are prohibited from unionizing, by law. There are certain groups that have always been prohibited from being certified at labour boards, people like articling students in law firms, interns in hospitals, and other groups. However, on the Hill, successive Liberal and Conservative governments, for decades and decades, have made it impossible for MPs' own staff to unionize.

When Canadians watch this and see Liberal and Conservative MPs stand up and say that they believe in unionization and the right to free collective bargaining, one might ask why they do not believe in that right for their own employees.

The New Democrats, in contrast, have recognized this right by voluntarily recognizing a union to represent the employees of members of Parliament here, and have done for decades. We have signed successive collective agreements that give superior wages, superior benefits, superior job force protections, and safer workplaces, because New Democrats have voluntarily extended the benefits of unionization to our staff.

I say it is time for the Liberals and Conservatives to jump into the 21st century. I call on them to repeal that law that prohibits their own employees from applying to a labour relations board and being certified.

I also want to talk generally and philosophically about different approaches to our economy, and where workers and legislation like this may fit in. It has been my experience, and it is my assertion, that the best performing economies in the world have three features. They have strong, responsible governments, strong business communities, and strong labour movements. All three of those factors come into play and I believe are key foundational elements of not only strong economies but just societies.

• (1250)

One only has to think of countries like Norway, Sweden, Germany, or any of the European countries that, year after year, top all metrics and measures of happiness and prosperity. When we look at what the core features of those countries are, it is always those three features: a strong democratic government, strong business communities that are innovative, and strong labour movements whose rights are respected. That is why this legislation, which seeks to undo some of the most egregious anti-labour and anti-union initiatives of the previous Harper government, is so timely and overdue.

I want to talk a bit about what this legislation would do for essential services. I think everybody recognizes that there are some jobs in society that are just so essential to the safety of the public or the functioning of our society that we accept there are some limitations put on the right to strike. However, the mechanism of determining who those people are and in what numbers is left to negotiation between the parties and, ultimately, to an independent

third-party arbitrator at a labour board if there is disagreement. What the Harper government did, and what this legislation seeks to change, is that it allowed the employer to unilaterally determine who is essential and in what numbers, again tilting the balance of the management-labour relationship completely in favour of the employer and upsetting years and years of established labour tradition and law in this country.

This legislation would also fix a problem where the previous legislation sought to undermine workers by limiting the opportunity for unions to refer differences and collective agreement disputes to arbitration for ultimate resolution. All in all, I am pleased to see this legislation come forward. I am pleased to see legislation that, once again, puts some respect back into the public service so that the federal government, of whatever stripe, Liberal, Conservative, New Democrat, Green, it does not matter, is compelled to treat the civil servants of this country in a manner that is fair and respectful.

Many features go into a democracy. It is not just about putting a piece of paper in a ballot box every four years. There needs to be an independent judiciary, a non-corrupt police force, a free and diverse media, an informed electorate, and a professional civil service. The civil servants of this country perform an invaluable service, not only to the people of this country and the taxpayers who pay their bills, in delivering the services that people need, but they play an integral role in upholding our democracy, because governments come and go but the civil service stays. It is its job to professionally serve the government of the day and faithfully administer and execute the policies that the government, which is democratically elected in our country, may choose. Therefore, treating those employees with the upmost respect, respecting them as workers, respecting their ability to engage in normative collective bargaining in this country, is a principle that must always be respected, and this legislation would do that.

I congratulate the government for bringing it forward and New Democrats will support it wholeheartedly.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's intervention today and, more specifically, his support of this piece of legislation because I agree with him that it is the right thing to do.

One of the really disconcerting parts of the previous legislation, Bill C-59 that was introduced by the previous Conservative government, was the fact that it stripped away the ability for federal employees to retain their sick days. Not only did it do that, but it then went ahead and took the liability that was associated with that and banked it against the 2015 budget before Bill C-59 had even passed.

I am wondering if the member opposite can comment as to whether he thinks that is a fair way to be treating employees, through a collective process where we seek to gain a mutual respect with employees and their unions.

*Government Orders*

•(1255)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, the short answer is no. I do not think that is a fair or respectful way to treat employees. It also speaks, frankly, to some disingenuity when it comes to costing these benefits. Using purported savings that have not been demonstrated in a budgetary way to indicate savings that, frankly, are illusory is not responsible budgeting or a responsible way to handle public finances either.

I want to pivot to one thing and ask my friend to consider, as a government member, the fact that this bill ignores changes that were made by the Harper government to the definition of “danger” and a worker's ability to refuse unsafe work. That remains untouched. I would hasten to add that one of the most important elements of protection in this country is a worker going to work in the morning and going home to their families at the end of the workday safe and sound. I would encourage him and members of the government, as soon as they can, to continue with this process to make sure that Harper-era attack on workers is also changed.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my colleague made a very good speech. I know he has done a lot of work on this and I appreciate his comments.

Early this morning we heard the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent basically accuse our Liberal friends of patronizing union bosses or union leaders, as he called them, because of the election. He went so far as to say that because of what the union bosses and union leaders are trying to do, federal employees are suffering. However, the Liberals were the ones who made all the changes.

Do you agree that the federal employees are suffering because of these changes, and do you agree with the statement that they are catering to the union bosses or the union leaders?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The member for Hamilton Mountain may want to use the word “he” as opposed to “you”.

The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, I think one of the underpinnings of a modern democracy is a country that fundamentally respects the workers' freely chosen bargaining representatives.

I have been fortunate enough to represent the good people of Vancouver Kingsway in this House since 2008. Initially, I sat through a Conservative minority, which was followed by a Conservative majority government. I can tell members that the smearing, disrespectful tones and language used by the Harper government against trade unions and the hard-working men and women who represent trade unions in this country was appalling. Terms like “union bosses” and “big unions” were used, trying to imply that unions were anything other than very legitimate organizations and associations with one goal in mind, which is to represent and advocate for the interests of their members in a responsible way.

I think that set back labour relations in this country for some time. Frankly, it was a dark decade for labour relations in this country. That is why I think this legislation is important, but it is not enough.

I want to come back to the issue around “danger”. I just pulled up the language that was used. The old language defined “danger” as any existing or potential hazard or condition, or any current or future activity that could reasonably be expected to cause injury or illness. That has been changed to something that is much narrower. It requires that the danger be imminent or present a serious threat to the life or health of a person. I am really concerned that has had a very negative effect on federal public sector workers' ability to challenge an unsafe workplace environment.

Again, I ask the Liberal government to follow up its rhetoric with action and introduce legislation to change that as soon as it can.

•(1300)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, we have been hearing a lot of rhetoric from the Conservatives today about how important the public service is and how important it is that we work with our public sector. However, another thing the previous Conservative government did with Bill C-4 was to unilaterally deem public services to be made essential, which would have effectively stripped the ability for unions to bargain in good faith with their employer, being the federal government.

With my colleague's experience in unions and being at the head of unions, can he comment on how he sees that kind of action being taken by the government, and whether it is a good or bad thing?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, I did cover the issue of essential services in my speech, but I am happy to elaborate a bit more.

It has been my experience that the employer community and often governments are very willing to tolerate strikes as long as the strikes do not have any real impact on anybody. However, the minute a strike actually starts to have some impact, have some effectiveness, and impacts the community at large, which is the very purpose of a strike, that is when employers and governments move to shut it down.

We saw the previous government, the Conservatives, order Canada Post workers back to work. I think they ordered Air Canada workers back to work. They interfered in free collective bargaining. Just when the workers were beginning to demonstrate to the public the importance of their work and how important their activities were so that when they withdrew their services people actually noticed it, that was when the government wanted to take away their right.

Essential services is an important concept in labour law, but it should be very carefully employed and restricted to only those situations where truly a case can be made that the withdrawal of a service would present a serious threat to the health or safety of the Canadian public. Otherwise, we have to let the economics and the free market determine the outcome in a strike.

Frankly, the New Democrats will always stand up for the right for people in this country to exercise their right to strike when that has been democratically determined, because that is an important right of association in a free and democratic society.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member talked at length about the NDP's own habit of union organizing on the Hill for a long time, which I think is a very laudable goal. I wonder if the member could tell us about the kind of effect having unionized political staff has. Can he confirm that the NDP has never engaged in union busting?

**Mr. Don Davies:** Madam Speaker, I have been on the Hill for almost 10 years and have engaged with unionized staff that entire time, and I have talked to other colleagues who have dealt with the unionized environment on the Hill for decades before that, and can tell my hon. colleague that it has been very positive. I think members will find that the employees in the New Democratic caucus have higher wages than those in any other caucus. They have better vacation leave than those in any other caucus. We pay them overtime, which I do not think the Conservatives or Liberals do. They have job security. In order for a New Democrat employee to be terminated, we have to demonstrate that there is just cause. In the Liberal or Conservative caucus, an employee can be let go at any time for any reason, including no reason at all, and may be subject only to be paid notice. Employees for New Democrats enjoy the same rights that all unionized employees do, which is better job security, and better wages and conditions.

I would encourage the member to talk to his Liberal colleagues. They should try it.

**Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time today with the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

I am very proud to speak to Bill C-62. I congratulate the President of the Treasury Board for listening to Canadians and introducing this important legislation. I would also like to thank the NDP's labour critic, the MP for Jonquière, for her excellent work in supporting the bill.

When the former Conservative government chose to go after public sector workers' bargaining rights, it was certainly not a surprise. Conservatives are long-time opponents of democratic institutions like collective bargaining and freedom to associate. They see workers as a resource to be exploited and potentially thrown away, not deserving of fairness or respect.

The NDP fought the Conservatives when they introduced legislation to rob bargaining rights from our public servants, and we promised to work to restore those rights. Today, we are helping to keep that promise.

Still, for the Harper government to attack public servants' sick leave provisions, of all things, was shocking, and in the end, self-defeating. It is well established that workers who have sick leave protection will stay home when they get sick, and conversely, workers without sick leave will go to work, spreading disease among their co-workers. There is a cost to having a sick workforce. That cost, lower productivity and lost services, is higher than the cost of paying a worker to stay home.

A 2016 study quoted in *Business Insider* magazine said that evidence suggests that paid sick leave is tied to increased job stability and employee retention following illness, injury, or birth of a child, increased worker productivity, decreased worker errors,

decreased accidents or injuries on the job, and when used to augment maternity leave, paid leave increases healthy babies, maternal health, and the duration of breast feeding, while also decreasing infant mortality.

That is why 128 nations around the world have paid sick leave for all workers, not just public servants. In fact, Canada is one of the few nations that lacks such a provision, putting us far behind many industrial and even non-industrial nations. According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research only three countries, the United States, Canada, and Japan, have no national policy requiring employers to provide paid sick days for workers who need to miss five days of work to recover from the flu.

Many states and cities in the U.S. have the same legislation as is in place in Europe. In Europe, the debate is not if a country should have mandated sick leave, it is how much the government should pay out, and nations compete to show they have not fallen behind.

I have a personal story. In my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, one of my staff was sick before Christmas with that flu and cold that was going around. She was off for six days. When she came back to work, she expressed how fortunate and pleased she was to have sick leave coverage included in the union contract. If we look at what the Conservatives had proposed, which was a maximum of six days of sick leave, it would have used up all of her sick leave before the year really even got going.

My daughter, Kellie, works in Vancouver at a private company where it is 90 days before employees get sick leave. She was sick last week, and in the end, will have very little money to cover her bills coming up over the next week or so. Sick leave is very important certainly to our young people, and having that in place is critical to both their job satisfaction and their financial security.

Sick leave is not the only provision the government is putting back into our public service labour laws. Conservatives also took away basic bargaining rights by giving themselves the power to unilaterally define essential services. This meant that public sector unions lost their biggest tool in negotiations: the right to strike. When an employer is not worried that their workers may walk off the job, they have little reason to negotiate fairly. The International Labour Organization, which is an agency of the United Nations, published a statement of principles concerning the right to strike. It said:

Without freedom of association or, in other words, without employers' and workers' organizations that are autonomous, independent, representative and endowed with the necessary rights and guarantees for the furtherance and defence of the rights of their members and the advancement of the common welfare, the principle of tripartism would be impaired, if not completely stripped of all meaning, and chances for greater social justice would be seriously prejudiced.

*Government Orders*

• (1305)

A similar provision in the province of Saskatchewan was struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2015, with the court saying:

The right to strike also promotes equality in the bargaining process. This Court has long recognized the deep inequalities that structure the relationship between employers and employees, and the vulnerability of employees in this context.

While strike activity itself does not guarantee that a labour dispute will be resolved in any particular manner or that it will be resolved at all, it is the possibility of a strike that enables workers to negotiate their employment terms on a more equal footing. What would be the result of taking away democratic and fair bargaining mechanisms? It would be a workforce that has little reason to stay, little reason to succeed. It is a policy that defeats itself and hurts all Canadians, so I am pleased to see the government repeal this provision.

Before our government colleagues pat themselves on the back too strenuously, however, I must again remind them about the terrible state of negotiations, currently, for many of our public servants. As I have said in the chamber before, Canada's border security officers have been without a collective agreement now for almost four years. These officers, who protect our nation from smugglers, illegal arms, and drugs and who provide compassion and aid to returning Canadians and refugees alike, are being treated with disrespect by the Liberal government.

I have quoted before from a letter I received from a border security officer who lives in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, and I will repeat that now:

It is further hoped that that current Liberal Government will engage in good faith bargaining and rightly recognize that the CBSA, along with its hard working employees, are indeed legitimate Law Enforcement Officers employed by a legitimate Law Enforcement Agency. All told, we are only seeking what a reasonable person would consider fair and just, and trust that the Liberal Government will come to the same conclusion.

Like the border security officers, RCMP officers are suffering under the neglect of the government. It is losing members to provincial and municipal forces, where they receive better pay, better equipment, and better treatment. It takes incredible commitment, and I really commend any officers who stay with a force that cuts their benefits and will not keep up with critical equipment and training needs or offer them the respect they so rightly deserve. RCMP members are forbidden from taking their grievances to the public service labour relations board, and they are forbidden from engaging in negotiating tactics such as strikes.

Finally, let us look at our own Parliamentary Protective Service officers. Every day we come to work on Parliament Hill, they are here to protect us, to greet us, and to put themselves between members of the House and those who potentially wish to harm us. On top of that, they provide assistance to our visitors and to tourists, Canadians who want to come to this place out of pride and respect. Sadly, the Liberal government is not treating our House of Commons security personnel with respect. The government has refused to negotiate in good faith, and we are once again seeing these officers wearing green hats with a banner that says "Respect" to protest their treatment.

My NDP colleagues and I will support Bill C-62, as we have always supported fair and democratic workers' rights. This

legislation, however, does not solve all the problems created by the former Conservative government, nor does it answer the urgent need for the Liberal government to return to the bargaining table with its law enforcement and security officers, a problem that is quickly creating a crisis across this nation and one the Liberals can solve by respecting fair negotiations everywhere.

• (1310)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, perhaps I will stay along the lines of the question I asked the previous speaker from his party, and it is specifically with respect to the previous Conservative government's approach to shunning the ability of unions to properly represent themselves, or more specifically, how Bill C-59 sought to eliminate the ability to bank sick days in the work environment. To add insult to injury, that government went one step further by including that decreased liability in its 2015 budget. Before the bill had even been passed, the Conservatives were already banking on the savings.

Is that a fair way to treat employees? Is that a fair way to operate in good faith with unions and our public service?

• (1315)

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Madam Speaker, no, it is not. In fact, it was actually done with either bad information or false pretenses when they were looking at reducing sick leave. In the parliamentary budget officer's report, the budget officer said, "the incremental cost of paid sick leave was not fiscally material and did not represent material costs for departments in the [core public administration]." That means that most employees who call in sick are not replaced, resulting in no incremental costs to departments. Therefore, the suggestion that cutting sick leave would save the government money was certainly disputed by the parliamentary budget officer.

The report went on to say that the PBO confirmed that public servants' use of sick leave was in line with the private sector. It was an average of 11.52 sick days per year for public service employees. Their counterparts in the private sector used an average of 11.3 sick days per year. Obviously, there was no abuse at all by public servants in having sick days and being able to bank sick days.

When the Conservatives proposed that sick days be limited to six, not only were they not giving exactly the right information on cost savings but they were proposing that public servants get fewer sick days than the average in the private sector.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Another important aspect of Bill C-4 introduced by the Harper government that we need to talk about is division 5, which amended the Canada Labour Code provisions dealing with dangerous situations. As defined, it narrowed the scope of what were considered situations of imminent danger. The Liberal bill provides a new definition for danger. However, it is important to make sure that the bill, which will pass in the end, properly supports health and safety officers within the process to help them refuse any work that is dangerous. At present, that can be difficult if they have to appeal directly to the Minister of Labour.

*Government Orders*

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the importance of having people to support us on occupational health and safety matters.

[*English*]

**Mr. Wayne Stetski:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her hard work on behalf of particularly middle-class Canadians when it comes to labour and contracts.

There is nothing more important than keeping our people safe on the job. There needs to be more than regulations in place. I recall that when I was regional manager with the ministry of the environment for southeastern British Columbia, we had a very active health and safety committee. If employees came to me and said that they were really concerned that there was some kind of risk associated with a job and they needed additional training or funding to help make the issue go away, it was always certainly at the top of my agenda to improve that and work through it. There is nothing more important than our workers' safety.

Absolutely, it should not have to go all the way to a minister. This needs to be handled locally. There needs to be a requirement that health and safety be a priority locally.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-62, an act to amend the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act and other acts. I have heard some good feedback on this.

What struck me this morning were some of the statements made by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. He is a good friend. I really respect the person, but obviously, we have different ideas. He made statements about union bosses and union leaders and about the Liberals just saying "thank you" because some of the unions were putting money in and campaigning against the Conservatives in the last election. I want to say that I totally disagree with that. The unions were campaigning against the Conservatives, yes, but they were also supporting anyone who could beat the Conservatives, and that was because they have a very bad reputation for taking away gains from labour that people have fought for all their lives, and they wanted to make sure that those people never got back in power until they got their act together and started to respect what labour could do.

We are pleased that the government is finally moving forward to repeal legislation based purely on a backward ideology that forces public servants to go to work sick and that totally undermines the principle of collective bargaining. We have to ask what took the Liberals so long to bring this bill forward. What took them so long to act? Of course, this is a question many Canadians are asking more and more often about the current government. Why are the Liberals not keeping the promises they made during the election, and why are they so slow to act or are not acting at all?

The list of broken promises is far too long to list in the time I have today, but we all know about the Liberals' failure to support electoral reform, their failure to restore door-to-door postal delivery, and the failure to keep the promise to make government more transparent. We also know about their failure to support pay equity legislation, anti-scab legislation, and measures to increase retirement security. One of their most shameful failures is the unwillingness to protect workers' pensions.

We have heard over and over again expressions of sympathy from the Prime Minister and his Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development for Canadian workers, like those at Sears Canada who have lost severance and termination pay and health care and life insurance benefits. They now face reduced pension benefits.

Canadians need and expect more than their sympathy and their shallow talking points. They need action. They need the government to change Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and solvency laws. We have shown the Liberals how this can be achieved, but still the government fails to act or move to protect millions of vulnerable Canadians. As my friend from Timmins—James Bay is fond of asking, when is the government going to put the protection of Canadian pensions ahead of Bay Street profits? It is a very good question and a question millions of Canadians would like to know the answer to.

Let me come back to Bill C-62. New Democrats want to undo Harper's anti-labour legacy and build a fair framework for collective bargaining. We welcome the introduction of Bill C-62, which would formally put an end to measures introduced by the former government. We know that the government Bill C-5 and Bill C-34, both introduced last year, have been languishing on the Order Paper since their introduction. We hope that their being amalgamated into Bill C-62 means that the government is finally ready to move forward.

Bill C-62 would reverse the attacks by the former Conservative government on the collective bargaining rights of federal public service employees, and it should be passed without delay. This bill would repeal the power given to the government to remove sick leave from federal public service collective agreements so that it could be changed unilaterally, outside of the bargaining process. The bill would also restore some of the changes to the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act affecting collective bargaining, which the Conservatives had included in one of their budget implementation bills in 2013, such as those affecting the designation of essential services. New Democrats rallied against the Conservatives' agenda to curtail public service workers' right to strike. The Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act was amended in December 2013 to remove the choice of dispute resolution being available to essential services.

● (1320)

In our 2015 platform, we promised Canadians we would stand up for public sector workers in light of the lost decade of Harper's union abuse. Supporting this bill makes good on that promise. A respectful relationship with the public service starts with safeguards to free and fair collective bargaining, not stacking the deck in favour of the employer.

Bill C-62 is aimed at repealing two blatantly anti-labour pieces of legislation introduced by the former Harper government: division 20 of Bill C-59 and Bill C-4. The first of these sought to unilaterally impose an inferior disability and sick leave management system on public servants, which was an unwarranted and significant attack on the rights of public service workers.

*Government Orders*

Bill C-4 would have drastically changed the rules for collective bargaining within the public service, giving the government full control over union rights, such as the right to strike and the right to arbitration. The government would have also determined what positions would be considered essential.

A key provision in the collective agreements of public service workers is sick leave, which allows full-time workers 15 days per year of leave for use in case of illness or injury. The previous Conservative government was determined to unilaterally change this provision by reducing the number of sick days from 15 to 6, eliminating banked sick days, and imposing a short-term disability plan for federal public servants.

The previous government claimed this change would have saved \$900 million, despite evidence to the contrary. According to the 2014 parliamentary budget officer's report, "the incremental cost of paid sick leave was not fiscally material and did not represent material costs for departments in the core public administration." That means most employees who call in sick are not replaced, resulting in no incremental costs to departments.

Under the Conservative legislation, workers would have been forced to choose between going to work sick or losing pay for basic necessities. Its legislation would eliminate all accumulated sick leave for public servants, reduce the amount of annual sick leave to 37.5 hours per year, subject to the absolute discretion of the employer, and institute a seven-day waiting period without pay before people could access short-term disability benefits.

I want to comment that, because I come from a union background. I served the union for 36 years. We had that seven-day waiting period also, and we made great gains. We proved to the company that having a waiting period of seven days would bring in workers who were sick, causing other workers to be sick, which actually caused a downturn in production because there were not have enough workers on the job to produce the machinery. Therefore, doing that was a step backward.

Both the NDP and the Liberals committed to reversing the changes during the last election. Bill C-62 would repeal the offending legislation, thus restoring sick leave provisions to public servants for the time being.

Bill C-62 would also revoke some of the more offensive Conservative legislation, including: giving government, as the employer, the right to unilaterally define essential services instead of negotiating an essential services agreement with the bargaining agent; undermining the right to strike by making it illegal to strike if at least 80% of the positions in a bargaining unit provide essential services, as defined by the employer; removing the bargaining agent's right to choose arbitration as a means of resolving collective bargaining disputes, making conciliation the default process, and undermining the workers in cases where the employer consents to arbitration by requiring arbitrators to give priority to Canada's fiscal circumstances relative to its stated budgetary policies. It also removed discrimination-based complaints by public servants from the jurisdiction of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. That to me is a shame.

While we fully support Bill C-62, we also know there is more to be done to dismantle the Harper government's legacy of anti-labour legislation. Some of those measures include restoring the Canada Labour Code provisions pertaining to the rights of Canadians to refuse dangerous work. That was gutted by the Harper government, a right that everybody wants when they go into a workplace. Too many deaths have happened, and it should not be determined by the employer. The Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act should be reinstated, bringing forward pay equity legislation, as well as the federal minimum wage, bringing Bill C-7 back to the House of Commons, and respecting the right of RCMP members to associate and bargain collectively.

● (1325)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, the member is out of time. I am sure that if he has more to add, someone will probably ask a question or two, and he will be able to finish there.

Questions and comments.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first off, I would like to acknowledge, and express that we do appreciate the support coming from the New Democrats on this very important piece of legislation. I often find the NDP members are very quick to criticize the government in terms of the whole issue of timing. It does not matter what piece of legislation it is, they always say it is not fast enough.

I can assure the member across the way that whether it is the Prime Minister or the government as a whole, restoring balance and respect to Canada's public service has been a priority. In fact, I am standing beside the former minister of labour who brought in labour legislation. These are commitments that have been given to the labour movement in Canada.

We have seen humongous attempts to make sure our civil servants are receiving their agreements. When we took office, 0%, not one federal worker was under a negotiated agreement. Since taking office, we have been able to bring it from 0% to 90% of our civil service in two years. We compliment those who have been sitting at the table, sitting down in good faith.

This is a government that works hard to build that level of respect, and appreciation for the importance of our labour movement. We recognize that in order for Canada to advance, and to add to the strength of our middle class, we need to have healthy labour relations.

Would my colleague across the way agree that a healthy Canadian economy involves having good, positive relationships with the labour movement, and that Bill C-62—

● (1330)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I do have to allow for other questions. I would ask members to ensure that they try to pose their question within the one-minute mark.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Madam Speaker, we are proud that you are bringing this bill forward, however, it is missing a lot. There are some things that were already brought into this House. He wants to have fair negotiations and a good relationship with labour, but he voted them down. One had to do with pay equity.

While we do support this legislation, sometimes you have to be criticized, because you have taken a wrong turn. Let us go forward, and let us do it faster rather than later.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the member for Hamilton Mountain that he is to address questions or comments through the Chair, and not to the individual members or the government.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, with some of these outlandish attacks by New Democrats on Conservatives, one would think that some of these members were auditioning for a position with the Liberals.

I want to ask about something that I hear from many energy workers in my riding. I have many unionized workers in my riding. The biggest issue they will often raise with me is the energy sector. Many unionized workers in Alberta and other parts of western Canada, and all across the country, benefit from Canada's responsible energy development sector, and benefit from manufacturing steel to be used in pipelines, as in our leader's riding, and yet we have the B.C. NDP and the national NDP standing against Alberta and Canada's energy sector.

Why will the members of the New Democratic Party not stand with unionized workers earning good money in our energy sector, and support these workers by supporting the development of pipelines?

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Madam Speaker, we do all stand together.

We might have differences in each provinces that we live in, but we all want to make sure that we have good, well-paying jobs, and that includes the energy sector. However, we also have to worry about our environment. We want to make sure that when we have those good-paying jobs, we are not wrecking our country.

Let us do it safely. Let us do it the proper way. Let us make sure that we keep the environment clean. We look forward to any suggestions or ideas for the health and safety of Canadians.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Resuming debate. Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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

\* \* \*

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

● (1335)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** There are 11 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-50.

Motions Nos. 1 to 11 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

## MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC)** moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP)** moved:

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

[*English*]

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC)** moved:

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 9.

Motion No. 10

Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-50 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

He said: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to this bill and these amendments. As a member of a political party and a member of Parliament, I certainly understand the importance of fundraising for our ability to campaign. Without it, we certainly could not carry out the activities that we do for our campaigns and our political parties.

*Government Orders*

However, there is certainly a difference between fundraising by asking supporters or friends to chip in \$10 or \$20, \$50 maybe, to help buy some lawn signs or pamphlets to distribute door to door, and, for example, a swanky \$500-a-plate dinner at a law firm attended by top Bay Street lawyers, with the Minister of Justice as the special guest. I cannot imagine how the Liberals cannot see the issue of lawyers being able to buy access to the Minister of Justice, for example.

That is exactly what was happening before the Liberals hastily introduced this bill. They were caught with their hands in the cookie jar and had to scramble to come up with an excuse. Bill C-50, or as I have called it in the past, the “got caught with my hand in the cookie jar so I am blaming the cookie jar” act, is their excuse. This is what they are using as their cover. They have broken their own pledge of having an open and accountable government. The legislation that has been introduced is certainly incredibly underwhelming.

In a document entitled “Open and Accountable Government”, one of the general principles listed for ministers and parliamentary secretaries when fundraising and dealing with lobbyists states, “There should be no preferential access to government, or appearance of preferential access, accorded to individuals or organizations because they have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties.” That is a pretty clear statement. Who was that document signed by? It was signed by none other than the Prime Minister himself. This is hardly shocking to Canadians, as this government is well known for being all talk with, at best, very little action.

Apart from explicitly stating that there is to be no preferential access to government by people who have made financial contributions to politicians and political parties, the document also clearly states that there should be no appearance of that. “Appearance” is a word that I am sure the Liberal government is quite familiar with. Does having a \$500-a-plate fundraiser at a Bay Street law firm, attended by the justice minister, pass the appearance test? I would say it does not.

Does having Chinese nationals with business interests in Canada attend a Liberal fundraiser with the Prime Minister and then provide six-figure donations to the Trudeau Foundation pass the appearance test? I would say no.

Does the Prime Minister vacationing on a billionaire's private island in the Bahamas, a billionaire who heads an organization that actively lobbies the government, pass the appearance test? I think I know the answer to that one, too, and it is no. It did not just fail the appearance test; it also failed the Ethics Commissioner's test, and the Prime Minister became the first one to have broken ethics laws. For the record, there are many ways to have a vacation on a private island that do not require selling access to the government. By all means, if that is the lifestyle that the Prime Minister likes to enjoy, I can certainly connect him with a number of travel agents across the country who could help him with his next trip.

However, let us get back to the serious issue at hand, which is simply this. How can Canadians trust a government that pledges to take accountability seriously and then fails its own appearance test at every single turn?

In an attempt to change the channel, Bill C-50 was introduced. It is like letting the foxes guard the henhouse. The Prime Minister is supposed to lead by example, but if his cabinet ministers see him enjoying a vacation on the private island of someone who lobbies the government, they probably think to themselves that there is nothing wrong with fundraisers attended by people who are going to lobby them. Therefore, it is no surprise that this bill was introduced.

• (1340)

There is only one thing this bill would do. It would bring these fundraisers into the open. The bill would not end the question about how appropriate it is for ministers of the crown or even the Prime Minister himself to attend fundraisers where they are being lobbied. No, it would not do that at all. The bill would simply move it into the public eye. Again, it is about appearance.

At least the bill would fulfill one aspect of the “Open and Accountable Government” document. The Liberals think that if the public can see it, everything is just fine. That is the logic they are going on. However, let us be clear. Cash for access does not become ethical simply because it is conducted in public. The Liberals should not need rules or laws to know that cash for access is unethical. That should simply be clear. There should not be a need for any rules or laws to make it clear.

Special interest groups and lobbyists should not have preferential access to very powerful figures simply because they can afford \$1,500 for a fundraiser ticket. To the Liberals, bringing these fundraisers into the public eye is enough, but is it really? Have we come to expect so little of our government that simply doing the bare minimum, simply having the appearance of doing the right thing, is acceptable?

Someone once said this:

Most of all, we defeated the idea that Canadians should be satisfied with less, that good enough is good enough and that better just isn't possible. Well, my friends, this is Canada, and in Canada better is always possible.

Who said that? It was none other than the Prime Minister himself, on election night in 2015.

Well, if better is always possible, according to the Prime Minister, then we need to do better than this bill, to be more accountable to Canadians. Certainly the Liberals need to do better.

Better does not mean a PR stunt where the actual issue is not addressed. Again, that is what Canadians have come to expect from this Liberal government: PR stunts that give the appearance of something being done, but in reality nothing changes. In this case, which is one of many examples, wealthy lobbyists will still be able to gain access to the Prime Minister and to senior cabinet ministers by simply buying a ticket for a fundraiser. That is what they have to do, put out a little cash and get some access. The Liberal government has missed a great opportunity to address this issue. Instead, the Liberals have chosen to duck and hide.



*Government Orders*

There is a very simple solution to this. If the Liberals would just take a moment to listen to the opposition, we can fix this. The Liberals should simply follow their own guidelines and stop attending these fundraisers, and that includes the Prime Minister. That is all it would take. We do not need a piece of legislation to figure that out. It is common sense.

By attempting to pass this underwhelming legislation, all the Liberals are doing is ensuring that the Prime Minister gets to continue to charge \$1,500 for wealthy and connected insiders to meet him and discuss government business. Perhaps they meet him and then make big donations to the Prime Minister's family foundation.

At this point, one thing is clear. The Prime Minister does not believe that the rules should apply to him. A new law would not make the Prime Minister's cash for access fundraisers ethical. He does not respect even the laws we have now. What in the world would make us think that he would respect this law?

The Prime Minister knew that the vacation he took was not allowed, yet he did it anyway. Then he just apologized because he was caught. Clearly, the Prime Minister believes that these laws are meant only for regular Canadians and not for him. That is why we have an issue with this bill. It is simply a PR stunt designed to cover up the fact that the Liberals are engaged in unethical behaviour, and it does not do anything to actually address the problem.

• (1345)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am not surprised that the member's party is not interested in improving openness and transparency in fundraising. I am curious about one thing, though. Given his party's new-found esteem for the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, I wonder if he might find it interesting that she said, "I support the direction of this proposed legislation. As I've said on previous occasions, transparency is important for any kind of regime that touches on conflict of interest." She went on to say, "The amendments to the Canada Elections Act proposed by Bill C-50 promote transparency with respect to fundraising activities."

Additionally puzzling is that the opposition party's leader first concealed the fact that he had held a private fundraiser. Later, when presented with evidence about that fundraiser, he said that he should not be held to the same standard of transparency as the Prime Minister, when in fact one must presume that he aspires to be prime minister one day.

Could the member explain why, in light of these revelations, his party is not in favour of openness and transparency in fundraising?

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Madam Speaker, actually, we are the ones talking about the need for openness and transparency, but we have a government that simply thinks it will throw this out in the open and do it in public but still take the cash for access. Does that somehow make it ethical? In what world does that meet the smell test? It certainly does not.

I have lots of constituents in my riding who would love the opportunity to tell the Prime Minister exactly how they feel about

certain pieces of legislation. What do they have to do? I guess they go and pay \$1,500 to the Liberal Party. Then they get to attend a fundraiser with him and can give their ideas there. That is what the government is telling them.

The Liberals say it is okay because they would let it be known when the fundraiser is going to occur and put it on a website somewhere, and that would make it all better. However, they would still take the cash for access, no problem. In what world does that make any sense? It sounds to me like just a PR stunt. That is all it is.

Why do they not actually start following the rules that are already in existence? They do not need to create new laws, just follow the rules that exist. They should follow the guidelines they put out for themselves. Does the Prime Minister believe that there should be one set of rules for everyone else and a different set for him and his cabinet? They know better than that.

• (1350)

**Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it would be one thing if the Conservative Party of Canada had a completely unblemished record on the matter of fundraising, but of course this is the party with the record of in-and-out scandals, of robocalls, of taking illegal contributions, and my hon. colleague knows that.

However, let us assume for a moment that there has been an epiphany, a turning of the leaf. Why did they not act in the face of those scandals to introduce legislation, as this government is doing? Through the passage of this legislation, fundraising events would be published with more notice, contributions over \$200 would be disclosed in a timely manner to Elections Canada, and everyone, including the press, would be welcome to attend.

Does anyone think that under the last administration a fundraising event hosted by the Conservative Party of Canada would see the press attend? I do not think so. Does my hon. colleague agree?

**Mr. Blake Richards:** Madam Speaker, if the member wants to stand and be proud of a piece of legislation that is simply a PR stunt, I guess that is up to him. If I were him, I would be much prouder to stand up and say that we are actually going to fix the problem. However, they are not doing that. They are simply saying that they would put this on a website somewhere and people would know when it would occur. That is all wonderful.

He mentioned the media being invited. There are a few media members who might disagree with that, because they were told to get the heck out of the room on some of these occasions, but that is another story. It is all out there. They can check that out for themselves.

*Government Orders*

What this boils down to is that we have a Prime Minister who does not want to follow the rules that already exist. He does not want to follow the laws. We already discovered that. He has now broken four of them. Why does he not just start by following the rules? We do not need to have a piece of legislation that says that we will put this on a website somewhere. Let us actually see the Liberals stop taking cash for access and start following their own rules. There is no one set of rules for everyone else and another for the Prime Minister and the cabinet. They should be treated the same as everyone else. It is time for the Prime Minister to wake up and figure that out.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before I recognize the next speaker, unfortunately there will have to be an interruption for question period. There will be a little time remaining after question period.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions.

[Translation]

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-50, a piece of legislation introduced by our government to amend the Canada Elections Act and improve the transparency of political financing.

[English]

As all colleagues in the House can agree, political fundraising is a key element in our Canadian democratic process. Political parties must fundraise for nearly all aspects of their operations, everything from basic day-to-day functioning to political campaigns during elections. I would like to respectfully remind the House that the existing regulations around fundraising in Canada are among the strongest in the world. These existing regulations include strict spending limits, a cap on annual donations, and an outright banning of corporate and union donations.

However, our government wants to ensure that transparency is at the heart of this new legislation, which is why Bill C-50, if passed, would legislate the following. It would make public all fundraising events involving the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, party leaders, and leadership contestants of parties with a seat in the House of Commons, when over \$200 a person is necessary to attend an event.

[Translation]

Information about such activities will have to be posted on the political party's website at least five days before the event.

[English]

It would also require political parties to report a list of attendees to Elections Canada within 30 days after the event.

[Translation]

Finally, technical amendments will be made in order to harmonize the rules applicable to nomination and leadership race expenses and those related to candidates' election expenses.

• (1355)

[English]

This legislation would account for certain privacy considerations involving the disclosure of the names of youth under 18, volunteers,

event staff, media, support staff for those with a disability, and those supporting a minister or a party leader in attendance such as security personnel. These would all be exceptions to the requirement to disclose their names on party websites.

Before I discuss Bill C-50 in detail, I would like to address the motion of the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley that is at report stage. The member's motion asked the House to delete clause 4 of the bill. I was disappointed to see this motion put forward because clause 4 enacts a direct recommendation made by the Chief Electoral Officer in his report after the last election.

In his report, the former Chief electoral Officer, Marc Mayrand, noted that:

...the definitions of "leadership campaign expense" and "nomination campaign expense" are problematic in that they do not include expenses incurred outside the contest period, even if the goods or services are used during the contest. Nor do these expenses include non-monetary contributions or transfers. This has consequences for the coherence of the political financing regime applicable to leadership and nomination contestants.

It is the implementation of this recommendation, recommendation A36 of the CEO report, that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley would like to see eliminated from Bill C-50. That recommendation is to "make leadership and nomination financial transactions fully transparent and the political financing regime applicable to contestants more coherent."

What is even more confusing is that this recommendation from the former Chief Electoral Officer received all-party support at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, leaving us all wondering whether the member checked with his NDP colleague on that committee before putting his curious motion forward.

Our government has set forth legislation that would increase transparency in fundraising in a balanced and efficient manner, and that is Bill C-50.

I would like to turn to the evidence that we heard at committee.

During his appearance before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the current acting Chief Electoral Officer, Stéphane Perrault, stated:

...I note that the bill offers a calibrated approach. Not all parties will be subject to the new requirements and I believe that is a good thing. Similarly, the rules will not apply to all fundraising activities, but only those for which a minimum amount is charged to attend and where key decision-makers are also present.

Mr. Perrault went on to say:

There is also an important exception for party conventions, including leadership conventions, except where a fundraising activity takes place within the convention. The convention itself is exempted, but if there's a fundraiser that meets all the conditions within the convention, then that is caught by the new rules. Again, this reflects a concern to achieve a proper balance and I think it is wise.

Later in his testimony, Mr. Perrault stated:

*Statements by Members*

Generally speaking, the bill increases the transparency of political fundraising, which is one of the main goals of the Canada Elections Act. It does so without imposing an unnecessary burden on the smaller parties that are not represented in the House of Commons or for fundraising events that do not involve key decision-makers.

When asked if he felt that Bill C-50 captured the right political entities for disclosure, Mr. Perrault said, "It captures a number of key decision-makers, and it doesn't capture, by contrast...people who are not key decision-makers".

He went on to say:

This bill is carefully drafted. It avoids some of the traps we've seen elsewhere.... I would say only that it increases transparency, that it's calibrated, and that I can administer this piece of legislation, with some improvements.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member will have four and a half minutes to complete his speech when the House next deals with this subject matter.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### HISTORIC AGREEMENT

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last Monday, after decades of effort, a historic agreement was reached between the Atikamekw Nation and the Government of Quebec. Manawan and Wemotaci will become the first indigenous communities in Quebec to establish their own youth protection system.

This network will essentially replace the DPJ, or Quebec's youth protection services, and will allow troubled youth to remain in their own community. These youth will be looked after by a trusted member of the community in a more culturally appropriate and family-oriented environment.

Our party has always encouraged nation-to-nation relationships, and this initiative is a perfect example of that.

We can build a shared future by respecting one another's traditions and distinct realities. When it comes to education, public safety, and, from now on, youth protection, indigenous communities are in the best position to organize the public services best suited to them.

We hope that this will be the first of many such agreements.

*Meegwetch.*

\* \* \*

● (1400)

[*English*]

### MAE O'SULLIVAN

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Mae O'Sullivan. Mae left us in December of last year after 98 wonderful years. A dedicated mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Mae was an inspiration to all who knew her. My thoughts and prayers are with Mae's children, her 14 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

Mae was a pillar of the Niagara Centre community, particularly in the city of Thorold. She was a member of Our Lady of the Holy

Rosary Church for more than 75 years and a dedicated political volunteer for nearly 80 years. She had a zest for life like no other, and always succeeded with grit and determination, always with a smile on her face. Many in my community requested to have Mae as a mentor over her many years. Ever the voice of reason, when Mae spoke everyone stopped and listened.

Our community is better for Mae's lifetime contribution.

\* \* \*

### SOMBRA FERRY BORDER CROSSING

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on January 11, the Coast Guard escorted ships on the St. Clair River and the resulting push on the ice destroyed the Bluewater Ferry border crossing between Sombra, Ontario, and Marine City, Michigan. I immediately raised this urgent issue to the Minister of Transport, Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Public Safety, and the Minister of Fisheries, and when they could not find funding I escalated it to the Prime Minister's Office. Despite having a ministers' retreat in London only days before and claiming to serve southwestern Ontario, they have yet to bring aid to reopen this vital border crossing.

The Liberals found two and a half million dollars to keep the ice rink on Parliament Hill open another month, but they could not find that same amount for this emergency. Liberal inaction means that the border will now be closed for eight months, or permanently, killing businesses on both sides of the border.

Today I call upon the Prime Minister to do the right thing and to restore the ferry border crossing at Sombra.

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[*Translation*]

### AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recently had a chance to visit the riding of my colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Louis, to tour the Montreal facility of MDA, a proudly Canadian company with employees all over the country.

[*English*]

MDA is helping develop the satellites for the Canadian Space Agency's RADARSAT constellation, which will be launched later this year. Satellite imagery from the constellation will serve the search and rescue operations of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

[*Translation*]

MDA can be proud of its technology, which will help improve rescue response times, better define search and rescue areas, and reduce the risk of injury to rescue personnel.

I am rising to congratulate MDA on its vital contribution to the mission of the Canadian Space Agency.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, February is Black History Month. It allows us to celebrate a diverse black Canadian community whose heritage traces back to the U.S., the Caribbean, and the African continent.

In Vancouver East, there was a vibrant community of black Canadians known as Hogan's Alley. While the strength of this community has never diminished, the community no longer has a geographical centre. It was destroyed to construct a viaduct in 1972, which is now slated to come down.

We need to learn from this history. What we build in its place needs to honour the contributions of the black community by ensuring vulnerable populations are housed.

Many of Canada's black communities' contributions are not recognized in our history. Black History Month gives Canadians an opportunity to hear this history and to highlight the struggles the black community continues to address in the fight against prejudice, discrimination, and inequality; black lives matter.

With love and courage, let us continue our efforts to build a more just, equal, and inclusive Canada.

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**CANADA 150 AWARDS**

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of presenting Canada 150 community leadership awards to 20 Fundy Royal constituents in December.

These awards showcased individuals who were not usually recognized for their work, those who continue day in and day out to work for those that are less fortunate, those who welcome newcomers to our communities, those who preserve and safeguard our environment, and those who help us recognize and reconcile with our past.

To Darryl Tozer, Scott Costain, John Whitmore, Barry Wanamaker, Andrew Fry, Ida MacPherson, Yennah Hurley, Austin Henderson, Zack Vogel, Sarah Arrowsmith, Lynda Carey, Dustine Rodier, Joan Routledge, Kharissma Williamson, Ben Whalen, Eric Cunningham, Beverley Franklin, Judy LeBlanc, Moranda Van Geest, and Phyllis Sutherland, I thank them for their service and commitment to our communities.

In 2018, let us reflect on how fortunate we are to call this beautiful country home, and remember that being Canadian means supporting each other and opening our hearts to those who need it the most.

\* \* \*

•(1405)

**VERNON ANNUAL WINTER CARNIVAL**

**Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, excitement is building across the North Okanagan—Shuswap as Vernon's 58th annual winter carnival opens and runs through February 11.

This year, Western Canada's biggest winter carnival theme is "Carnival in Wonderland". Expect to see more than Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the Queen of Hearts at dozens of events around Vernon for the next 10 days. People may even run into Jopo and Jopette, the carnival's mime ambassadors.

Tonight, a new Queen Silver Star will be crowned and Saturday the big marquee parade winds its way through downtown Vernon.

Silver Star Mountain will host the "Over the Hill Downhill" event and a world class snow sculpture contest.

There will be events for everyone, including pancake breakfasts, sporting events, dinner, theatre, and pub nights, and even a grandparent-grandchild dance.

Watch out for the carnival cops, because they have been known to nab anyone from politicians to hockey players and lock them up for not wearing their carnival buttons.

I thank all of the carnival volunteers and sponsors. Without them this winter wonderland festival would not be possible.

\* \* \*

**SURREY CENTRE**

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be back in the nation's capital, but I am also grateful for the time I spent in my riding of Surrey Centre.

Over the holiday season, I hosted many events, but one of my most favourite events was hosting a new Canadian citizen party in the most Canadian way possible, on an ice rink. During the event, I had the opportunity to speak to many of them. I learned about their diverse backgrounds and how they continued to define what it was to be Canadian.

Since October 2015, Surrey Centre has welcomed over 2,000 new citizens. I am excited to see the contributions they will continue to make in our schools, businesses, and industries in Canada.

I want to thank all of the new citizens for choosing Surrey Centre as their home. I want them to know that I am here for them.

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**SOUTH SURREY—WHITE ROCK**

**Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the people of South Surrey—White Rock for the confidence they have shown in me and the support they given to me. Their consistent passion for our community and our country reminds me clearly of what it means to be Canadian.

As I take my seat in the House, I would also thank my elected colleagues on both sides of the House, and in local and provincial governments across our great country. They give their energy, effort, and thought to provide perspectives that help us all to better understand what it means to live in relative harmony in a proudly multicultural and pluralistic country. We are tolerant and uniquely accepting, and our job as elected representatives is not easy.

*Statements by Members*

In 1946, Albert Einstein was asked, “Why is it that when the mind of man has stretched so far as to discover the structure of the atom we have been unable to devise the political means to keep the atom from destroying us?” Albert Einstein responded, “That is simple, my friend. It is because politics is more difficult than physics.”

Sadly, I have always found physics to be most difficult. Please be tolerant.

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**ALBERTA RURAL CRIME TASK FORCE**

**Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, rural crime in Alberta is on the rise, and our Alberta Conservative caucus initiated the Alberta rural crime task force.

My colleagues and I held many meetings, round tables, and public forums to hear community concerns. Many constituents expressed gratitude to the RCMP for doing an amazing job. However, the justice system keeps putting career criminals back on street to continue their illegal activities.

While the majority of crimes we see are classic break and entering, we are now seeing more violent rural crimes. There are stories about terrible beatings, holdups at gunpoint, and in some cases, victims are victimized by the same criminal over and over. I heard stories of witness intimidation and the fear of reporting a crime, because people know that criminals will get virtually no jail time and will be back to continue the harassment.

It is time the government takes a strong stance on ensuring career criminals are kept off of our streets.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we launch Black History Month, I would like to draw to the attention of the House a remarkable piece of literature by Robyn Maynard entitled *Policing Black Lives*. This book chronicles the experience of black people in Canada in a raw, exposed, and truthful place. It documents the slavery of black people in Canada, the harsh economic and social realities we faced post-slavery, and the institution on systemic practices and policies that continue to undermine us today.

Because the experience of black Canadians is seen to be not as bad as in the United does not make it okay. In fact, it is this notion that has led to the generalized erasure of the black experience in education and the Canadian proclivity for ignoring racial disparities.

I invite everyone in the chamber and across the country to learn more about black history in Canada, and this book will help them do so.

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**WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the first week of February, designated by the UN General Assembly as the World Interfaith Harmony Week, is celebrating its eighth year.

In Toronto, the city gave a proclamation designating February 1 to 7 as WIHW week. The WIHW Toronto's theme for 2018 is “The Promise of Inclusion”, where people of all faith groups of goodwill are coming together through dialogue, music, culture, and art to show the world that peace and harmony can exist irrespective of faith, culture, or creed. This is truly a reflection of what a cosmopolitan society should be: accepting difference and seeking to actively understand it.

I encourage all Canadians to attend any of the WIHW events in their communities and to spread the message of “Love of the Good” and “Love of the Neighbour”.

\* \* \*

**FLORENCE KEHL**

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life and legacy of the late Florence Kehl.

Florence was a woman of faith, love, and compassion. It was these characteristics that led her to found the Stratford House of Blessing in 1983 with the support and love of her husband Norman. Three and a half decades later, the Stratford House of Blessing stands as a tribute to Florence, an institution of caring and compassion in our community, fulfilling its mandate of serving those who are hurting and in need.

Florence was a recipient of multiple awards and commendations, including both the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals, the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, and Stratford's Citizen of the Year.

In speaking with members of Florence's family, they mentioned that she had a long list of good deeds she wanted to accomplish in the year to come. It now falls to each of us in our community to fulfill those goals in memory and honour of this remarkable woman.

Through hard work and a kind heart, Florence Kehl made this world a better place.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL ANTHEM**

**Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak today in memory of the hon. member who held this seat before me.

[*English*]

Last night, I was honoured to be present in the gallery as Bill C-210, an act to amend the National Anthem Act, was voted on by senators. After sitting in the other place for 19 months, including nearly a year at third reading, I was delighted to see senators finally adopt the bill and send it for royal assent.

*Oral Questions*

Our anthem will very soon be gender-neutral, promoting Canada's commitment to the equality of sexes and women's rights.

[*Translation*]

Mauril's dedication to making the national anthem gender neutral will stand as his legacy to future generations.

[*English*]

I am very proud to stand here today and sing along with all my hon. colleagues.

**Some hon. members:** In all of us command.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. As much as we all appreciate patriotism, I want to remind members that we are not here to sing or chant, except on Wednesdays of course when we sing the national anthem. It should be one person at a time. I know members understand that.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the future of our planet. The people of Salaberry—Suroît came together on January 16 to discuss this issue and find ways to make a true green shift happen. We welcomed three renowned experts: Normand Mousseau, a professor of physics at the Université de Montréal; Lorraine Caron, head of Transitio; and Geneviève Aude Puskas, a science communicator for Équiterre.

They reminded us that the Canadian government pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. However, the government's plan is not based on any scientific data. We need to make a green shift, with a more robust public transit system, greener building standards, and a concerted plan involving all federal departments.

Measures like these would have economic, social, and environmental benefits. It is time for us to follow through on our ambitions and commitments, for the sake of our future and our children's future.

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• (1415)

[*English*]

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today begins Black History Month, where we celebrate in a particular way the historic and present contributions of black Canadians. Canada has been richly blessed by these contributions.

Many of the first black Canadians came here to escape slavery. Upper Canada was the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to free slaves and legislate against slavery in 1793. In addition to our relatively early opposition to slavery, Canadians can take pride in the pivotal role we played in the fight against apartheid.

However, our relative success is not enough. Ongoing instances of racism continue to impact the lives of black Canadians. Conservatives are eager to work with colleagues in other parties and civil society to fight racism.

I would like to highlight the contributions of a few black Canadians in particular.

Lincoln Alexander was the first black member of Parliament, then cabinet minister. He was also a Conservative.

William Hall was the first black Canadian sailor, as well as the first black Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross.

Mary Ann Shadd was a well-known anti-slavery activist, and the first woman publisher in North America.

We applaud the past and continuing vital contributions of Canada's black community.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 23 years ago, the House of Commons recognized February as Black History Month. Let us celebrate our differences that make Canada a strong, diverse, inclusive, and proud country.

The theme for 2018 is "Black Canadian Women: Stories of Strength, Courage and Vision".

Today, I have the privilege of paying tribute to one of these women. Her name does not appear in the history books. Widowed at 40, she bore the responsibility of raising her eight children. She made enormous sacrifices for their education. She left school to work as a seamstress, so she could put food on the table. She died in Montreal in 2003 and was buried in Saint-Marc. She showed strength, courage, vision, and much love.

Thank you to Ms. Elvire Adé Dubourg, my beloved mother.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*Translation*]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a year ago, the Prime Minister tried to cover up details of his vacation on a billionaire's private island.

Thanks to our leader, who demanded an investigation into the Prime Minister's illegal vacation, we all know that the Prime Minister contravened four sections of our conflict of interest and ethics legislation.

Now the Prime Minister has to accept the consequences and prove to Canadians that he is following the same rules as every other member of the House.

When will he pay back the \$215,000 he took?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, immediately after the commissioner's report was released, the Prime Minister took responsibility, accepted the commissioner's findings, and committed to clearing all future personal and family vacation plans with the commissioner.

For weeks and months, for a whole year even, the opposition demanded the report, and now that the report has been tabled, the opposition is refusing to accept the findings. We, in contrast, are grateful to the commissioner, we accept her findings, and we will follow all her recommendations.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all week now, we have been trying to get an answer from the Prime Minister, but he refuses to answer any questions himself. Meanwhile, the government House leader keeps reading from the same cue cards prepared by the Liberal spin doctors. It sounds like a broken record.

Can the House leader put down her cue cards and simply tell Canadians whether the Prime Minister intends to pay back the \$215,000 he picked from their pockets?

• (1420)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said several times, the previous commissioner, both in her report and in her testimony at committee, answered many questions related to her report. We accept her findings and we respect her work.

Every day, the opposition members read the same question, and yet they tell me I should not read the same answer. Funny, is it not?

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is indeed quite funny. Based on what the House leader is saying, we are supposed to believe that the Prime Minister is above the law. The Prime Minister thinks that Canadians have one law for all other members of the House and another law that applies only to him.

I would like to know why ministers who are caught red-handed have to pay back what they took, when the Prime Minister refuses to pay back the \$215,000 he picked from the pockets of taxpayers—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I said is that, on this side of the House, we respect the work of all the other officers of Parliament. Unlike the opposition, when officers of Parliament make recommendations, we take them seriously, and we work with those officers to make sure that we are following their recommendations. What is more, the Prime Minister committed to having all future personal and family vacations cleared ahead of time.

[English]

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen other Liberals, like the indigenous services minister, the member for Malpeque, and the member for Humber River—

Black Creek, pay back taxpayers for inappropriate expenses that they claimed. That was the right thing to do.

However, the Prime Minister thinks he does not have to pay back over \$200,000 in illegal expenses that he charged. He thinks he is above the law and above the rules.

Why does the Prime Minister think there is one set of rules for him, and another set of rules for everyone else?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions the Prime Minister and myself, and many others, have reiterated that immediately following the report being submitted we accepted the recommendations. The Prime Minister took responsibility. What is clear is that the Conservatives continue to focus on the Prime Minister. They continue to focus on us, while we will continue to focus on Canadians.

Last night, once again, the Prime Minister was at a public town hall. He was hearing directly from Canadians. They were talking about the very real challenges they are facing, including immigration delays. While the Conservatives thought 24 months was adequate, we have reduced that to 12 months. We will continue getting—

**The Speaker:** The hon. opposition House leader.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are focused on the Prime Minister, because he is the only prime minister in the history of Canada to break the Conflict of Interest Act.

Recently, the Prime Minister said that he believes the standard applied to others on the issue of sexual harassment applies to everyone, including himself. That, indeed, is true.

Why is it that when it comes to paying back taxpayers' dollars, that the Prime Minister clearly should not have used and that is owed back, he thinks he does not have to pay.

Why does the Prime Minister think the standard that is applied to everyone else in this place, when it comes to paying for illegal or improper expenses, does not apply to him?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, as has been the case for past prime ministers and as is the case for this Prime Minister, whenever and wherever the Prime Minister travels, there are costs related to security.

Once the commissioner had submitted the report, the Prime Minister took responsibility. He accepted the recommendations. It is interesting, because the opposition, for weeks, months, a year even, was asking for that report to be submitted. Now that it is submitted, it is refusing to accept its findings.

We respect the work of the commissioner. We respect the work of officers of Parliament, and we thank them for their work. We will accept their recommendations.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Panama papers scandal broke in 2016, and to date, revenue agencies around the world have managed to recover over a half a billion dollars from the identified tax cheats. Spain alone managed to recover \$122 million.

The Canada Revenue Agency is telling us that it will not have anything to report on this until 2020. The CRA brings out the big guns to deal with small taxpayers but treats big-time fraudsters with kid gloves.

The Liberals have a clear choice. Will they require the CRA to be accountable to Canadians or will they continue to protect the agency's incompetent leaders?

● (1425)

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, combatting tax evasion is a priority for our government. We have a full-time team dedicated to investigating the wealthiest members of society, while another team is dedicated to offshore compliance.

As of December 31, 2017, 150 taxpayers connected to the Panama papers had been identified for audit. I chose to tighten the rules for the voluntary disclosures program so that any taxpayers identified through information leaks, such as the Panama papers, do not have access to that program.

These individuals must face the full consequences of their actions.

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that does not explain why Spain is getting results and we are not.

[English]

It is clear to me that the minister, right now, is protecting incompetence. The Canada Revenue Agency moves at a snail's pace against fraudsters using offshore tax havens. While the U.S. heavily fines KPMG for facilitating tax evasion, the CRA gives KPMG a slap on the wrist for the same offence.

Half the calls the agency receives go unanswered, and 30% of the information given to the other half is actually wrong. Why is the government rewarding incompetence by giving CRA executives \$35,000 bonuses?

[Translation]

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance. That is why in our last two budgets we invested nearly \$1 billion in doing just that.

The Canada Revenue Agency is now able to assess the risk of all large multinational corporations each year. This year it is reviewing every transaction over \$10,000 in four regions that are deemed high-risk. The first two are the Isle of Man and Guernsey. As far as offshore compliance is concerned, on December 31, 2017, the Agency audited 1,090 taxpayers and launched criminal investigations—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while creating the Canada Infrastructure Bank, the Liberals courted the most powerful investors on the planet, all behind closed doors. Companies like BlackRock only want one thing, more money in its pockets. Guess what, the Minister of Finance promised it that. An economist at the University of Ottawa, Randall Bartlett, called the scheme a subsidy by another name.

Why do the Liberals keep helping their Bay Street friends, and doing absolutely nothing to help everyday Canadians get by?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with our historic \$180 billion infrastructure plan, which includes the establishment of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

We are proud to have announced that Bruno Guilmette has been appointed as chief investment officer, and that Janice Fukakusa has been appointed as chair of a highly qualified and diverse board of directors that will lead this important organization.

Now operational, the bank is helping to build more infrastructure across Canada, and create the strong, sustainable, and inclusive communities Canadians want to live in.

[Translation]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, two years after announcing the infrastructure bank, the Liberals still do not want to give us the whole story.

What we do know is that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have held several closed door meetings to court investment giants like BlackRock.

We also know that those companies want to invest in Canada because the bank poses less risk and allows them to make maximum profits from user fees.

Will the Minister of Finance finally have the courage to tell Canadians the truth about who will truly benefit from the infrastructure bank?

[English]

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. The Canada Infrastructure Bank will invest in infrastructure that is in the public interest, providing an innovative, new infrastructure financing tool, and attracting private sector investment to build transformational projects that may not otherwise get built. This is an optional tool that our provincial, territorial, indigenous, and municipal partners can use to increase the long-term affordability and sustainability of infrastructure in their communities.



### ETHICS

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke the law. He has been found to have violated four major sections of the Conflict of Interest Act and, in breaking the law, he wasted hundreds of thousands of Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars. He has offered no meaningful answers in the House, and has refused a reasonable invitation to discuss the Ethics Commissioner's findings in the serene and respectful surroundings of the ethics committee.

Why, at the very least, will the Prime Minister not simply repay Canadians for his illegal vacation?

• (1430)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister took responsibility and accepted the findings of the commissioner. The Prime Minister has taken steps to ensure that all future family vacations are cleared ahead of time. There is a process here. There was a concern, and the commissioner looked at it and offered a report. We have accepted the recommendations, and the Prime Minister has accepted responsibility.

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, even the British prime minister appears before a committee.

As the Liberal House leader recites the Prime Minister's empty lines, the message is "Case closed, nothing going on here, the PM promises to consult the Ethics Commissioner about future vacations."

However, there are other important findings in the commissioner's report. For example, evidence of the PM's bizarre, unethical attitude regarding lobbying. He thinks he can break conflict and lobby laws, because he is just relationship building. His interaction is ceremonial.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and this government will continue to engage with Canadians, and listen to the very real challenges they are facing. When it comes to these questions, the Prime Minister has answered these questions.

Since the new year, the Prime Minister has been available at numerous town halls, including last night in Winnipeg. Tonight, he will be in Edmonton. Canadians are asking tough questions, questions that matter to them. We will continue to engage with them.

Canadians are concerned about the economy, and the government has created 422,000 jobs in 2017, the best number since 2002.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the former ethics commissioner's report is very clear: the Prime Minister violated four sections of the Ethics Act. This is compounded by the fact that he broke his own rules by accepting a family trip to the Aga Khan's private island. Moreover, he reoffended when his family planned yet another trip on the public purse.

### Oral Questions

Canadians deserve answers. The time of reckoning has come. Can the Prime Minister tell us that he will take responsibility for his mistakes and pay back this illegal gift?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister took responsibility and accepted the recommendations.

Since the beginning of the year, the Prime Minister has answered questions asked by Canadians all over the country at open and public town halls. Canadians continue to be concerned about job creation for the middle class and for those working hard to join it.

Under our plan, Canadians created 422,000 jobs in 2017, an annual record since 2002. We understand that the opposition does not want to talk about the economy because they know that our plan is working.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Canadian taxpayers pay for their family vacations down south with their own money. It is inconceivable that we have to pay for the illegal travel expenses of the Prime Minister, his family and his friends. This is an inappropriate and illegal gift, and it must be paid back.

When will the Prime Minister finally reimburse Canadian taxpayers for the cost of his illegal vacation?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the security agencies make determinations on what is needed to protect the Prime Minister, as they have done for previous prime ministers. We will follow their recommendations. The former commissioner has acknowledged that these costs were incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister.

[English]

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when the former health minister repaid inappropriate expenses in 2016, the Prime Minister said, "The situation was a reminder for all of us to be extremely careful about our expenses and about the public trust that we wield."

Now that the Ethics Commissioner has ruled that his vacation was illegal, why is the Prime Minister refusing to show the same level of respect for taxpayers? He knew the trip was wrong because he tried to hide it. If he truly accepts the commissioner's finding of guilt, why will he not repay Canadians?

*Oral Questions*

●(1435)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said in French and shall repeat in English, the security agencies make determinations on what is needed to protect this Prime Minister, as they have done for previous prime ministers, and we follow their recommendations. The former commissioner has acknowledged that these costs are incurred as part of the role of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister will continue to work with the commissioner to clear future family vacations.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is such a double standard. There is one set of rules for the Prime Minister and another set of rules for everyone else. Contemptible, hypocritical, and entitled is the only way to describe the Prime Minister's coached response and the coached response of those around him to be found guilty on four counts of breaking ethics rules.

If this were any other workplace, the Prime Minister would be fired and at the very least would have to pay it back, but in this place, he cannot be fired until an election, so we are asking him to pay the money back. Why will he not?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have said many times that the Prime Minister accepts the responsibility and accepted the finding.

When the Conservatives were in government, they had a habit of undermining our officers of Parliament and now that they are in the opposition, they continue to do the same. For weeks, months, and a year even, they were asking for the report to be released. Now that it has been released, they refuse to accept its decision.

We will take responsibility. We have accepted the recommendations and we thank the commissioner for her work.

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[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2017, there were more than 4,000 opioid-related deaths in Canada. It seems that only the government does not understand the extent of the crisis, which is now moving into eastern Canada.

In Hochelaga, the Dopalliés project reaches out to drug users to teach them about safe practices. It is working and saving lives, but we still do not know whether the funding will be renewed in April. This is urgent.

What is the minister waiting for to renew programs that effectively address the opioid crisis?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply troubled by the deepening opioid crisis in Canada. Our emergency action to date includes significant federal investments, new legislation, and expedited regulatory action.

Going forward, we will continue to work with the provinces and territories to increase access to treatment, support innovative approaches, and fight the stigma of opioid use. We will continue to work with all our partners.

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the numbers are in. In 2017, a staggering 4,000 Canadians died from opioid overdoses, an unprecedented 1,400 people in British Columbia alone. However, this is not an opioid crisis. It is not an overdose crisis. It is a crisis of social isolation and bad drug policy.

Jagmeet Singh has proposed the only real solution: treat addiction as a health issue, not a criminal one. When will the government abandon the failed war on drugs and adopt a health-based approach to addiction and drug use?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we are facing a national public health crisis due to opioid overdose, and our government is treating this as a public health issue and not a criminal matter.

We are not looking at decriminalizing or legalizing any other drugs aside from cannabis, as decriminalization would not assure quality control of drugs, and there would still be the risk of contamination on the streets. By streamlining the application process for supervised consumption sites and giving legal protection for those who seek emergency help during an overdose, we are working toward improving access to treatment and social services for those who need it.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government House leader just does not seem to understand. The Prime Minister has been found guilty of committing an illegal act. He took a gift worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from someone who was at that moment doing business with his government.

Does the government House leader not understand that the Prime Minister broke the law?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand. I understand that I was elected here by the people of Waterloo to represent their concerns. The Prime Minister had confidence in me and asked me to become a minister, asked me to become the government House leader, to take on those responsibilities seriously.

While the Conservatives continue to be focused on the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister and this government will continue to be focused on Canadians and the very real challenges that they are facing. If members would notice, we have been engaging with Canadians. We have a plan that is working. Some 422,000 jobs have been created by Canadians for Canadians because our plan is working. Conservatives do not want to talk about the economy because they know our plan is working.

*Oral Questions*

•(1440)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was found guilty of violating four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act when he took a private vacation on a billionaire's island in the Caribbean. We have been asking a very simple question for the last four days. The responses have been inadequate. They have been shameful and have been disrespectful to this place. The Liberals are saying, "There is nothing to see here. Oh, the Prime Minister broke the law, but it does not matter, move on."

This is important. Why will the Prime Minister not pay back the money to Canadians?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said every single time the same question has been asked over and over again, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister accepted the recommendations and accepted responsibility.

The Prime Minister will continue to focus on Canadians so that we can ensure that the economy and our strategic investments are working for them. We are here for Canadians by Canadians. Those are the very people we serve. While the Conservatives will continue focusing on the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister and this government will continue focusing on Canadians.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we seem to be getting nowhere with the scripted answers from the government House leader, but fortunately, there was another member of this House who had a front-row seat on this illegal vacation.

I would like to ask the Minister of Veterans Affairs, did he incur any expenses that he billed to taxpayers for the trip, and does he think the Prime Minister should pay back Canadians for the \$200,000 he has billed them for this illegal vacation?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, immediately after the report was released, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility and he accepted the recommendations. It was the opposition members who thought that the commissioner should investigate. The commissioner has investigated. She has released her report. We have accepted the recommendations. The Prime Minister has accepted responsibility.

While the Conservatives continue to focus on the Prime Minister, this Prime Minister and this government will continue to focus on Canadians.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the only recommendation was a finding of guilt.

If Canadian taxpayers file a false expense claim when they file their taxes and the taxman finds out they have broken the law, they do not get to keep their ill-gotten tax return and just say, "Sorry, I will not do that again." They have to pay it back with interest and penalties. Once again, there is one set of rules for the Prime Minister and one set of rules for everyone else.

Why will the Prime Minister not finally do the right thing and pay back the ill-gotten gains that he billed to taxpayers? He should pay the money back.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the Prime Minister accepted the recommendations and accepted responsibility.

It is clear that the Conservatives will talk about anything except for the economy. They praise themselves on being stewards of the economy. What they could not do in 10 years we have been able to accomplish in two years, with 422,000 jobs created by Canadians for Canadians, the highest number since 2002.

We will continue to engage with Canadians. We will continue to respond to the very real challenges they are facing. They know that our plan for the economy is working.

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**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, most anniversaries we like to celebrate, but today is a day that Liberals are hoping Canadians forget all about, because it was a year ago today that Liberals and their Prime Minister broke a sacred oath to Canadians to make 2015 the last election under first past the post.

Despite this betrayal, hope is alive in Canada. All opposition parties in Quebec have promised to bring in proportional representation. Prince Edward Islanders voted for it. In my home province of British Columbia, Premier John Horgan will be campaigning for it in the fall.

If the Liberals want to restore a little faith, help elect more women, and truly make every vote count, will they show just a little bit of contrition, apologize, and get to work on real electoral reform?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to strengthening our democracy, Canadians want us to focus on what unites us, not on what divides us. We listened to Canadians. They expect us to protect the integrity of our democracy.

My job is to strengthen and protect our democratic institutions and ensure they represent the values of Canadians. Through the introduction of Bill C-33 and Bill C-50, we are moving to accomplish that mandate.

I know every member of the House shares the deep affection Canadians have for our democracy. Canadians want us to work together on priorities that unite us, and that is where our focus will remain.

*Oral Questions*

●(1445)

*[Translation]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after a number of access to information requests, the government finally released 773 pages of emails exchanged between the government and Netflix, but 90% was redacted. It almost seems as though the government has something to hide. Is that possible?

In his year-end review, the Prime Minister had the nerve to contradict Céline Galipeau. Regrettably, he went and said that it would be impossible to charge GST on Netflix, when we know that is not at all the case. Everyone knows that.

Why is the government so determined to mislead the public about the Netflix deal? Why is it afraid to make the deal public? Is it afraid that we will be proven right?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have some good news to share today. Netflix has made an initial investment as part of a deal to acquire a Quebec production, *Les Affamés*. Congratulations to Robin Aubert and his team. Their film is going to be distributed to over 100 countries, giving them access to all those markets.

Of course, the Investment Canada Act is there to guarantee that new foreign investments are of net benefit to Canadians. The act requires strict confidentiality in order to protect the commercial information of businesses that want to invest in Canada. Canadians know the broad strokes of the deal, and we are very proud of this new production—

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Sudbury.

\* \* \*

*[English]***TAXATION**

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last election, we ran on a platform to help the middle class and those working hard to join it, including middle-class families like those in my riding of Sudbury. We put in place the Canada child benefit, which puts more money, tax-free, into the hands of nine out of 10 families. We did this by ending the Conservative practice of sending cheques to millionaires. The Conservatives voted to keep sending cheques to millionaires. Could the government explain the importance of focusing on those who need it most?

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. For a decade, the Harper Conservatives focused on giving boutique tax credits that benefited some but not all. They are at it again today with a proposed non-refundable tax credit that does nothing for the self-employed and small business owners, that does nothing for low-income workers, that does nothing for those who do not qualify for EI, that does nothing for those who have lost their job and are looking for one.

We have taken a different approach with the Canada child benefit, one that is helping nine out of 10 Canadian families. That is giving more to those who need it the most. That is the right approach for the Canadian dream to be alive and well.

*[Translation]***MARIJUANA**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned that 35 federally licensed cannabis producers were being financed by unknown investors from tax havens. We also know that, contrary to what the minister claims, the Liberals' proposed investor background check does not apply to the majority of industry players. In other words, their background check plan is full of holes.

Can the minister assure us that organized crime has not infiltrated the Prime Minister's marijuana program?

*[English]*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one prime objective of our whole new regime on cannabis is to stop the flow of illegal cash to organized crime. That includes on the selling end of the equation, and it certainly includes on the investor end of the equation.

Under our proposed regulations, security clearances will be mandatory for individuals who occupy key positions in any organization, as well as background checks on significant investors who hold more than 25% of any particular company.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is giving me roughly the same answer I got from the Minister of Health yesterday. Currently there is some confusion over what is legal and what is illegal and how to regulate it.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness confirm that before moving ahead with Bill C-45 the necessary background checks will be made in order to prevent organized crime from infiltrating the Prime Minister's marijuana program?

*[English]*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the regulations that will be promulgated under this new legislation will indeed require security clearances. In addition, the Minister of Finance recently reached an agreement with his provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure that we know who owns which corporations, which will help prevent Canadian or international companies from facilitating tax evasion, money laundering, or any other criminal activity.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a state-controlled Chinese company is in the process of taking over one of Canada's largest construction companies. Not only does this raise security concerns in terms of critical infrastructure, but construction companies across the country are raising concerns about thousands of job losses.

*Oral Questions*

Will the minister commit to conducting a full security review of the sale and to extending the period of time for a rigorous net benefit assessment under the Investment Canada Act?

• (1450)

**Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, global companies want to invest in Canada precisely because of our skilled workforce and our strong innovation economy. Our government is open to investment that will grow our economy and create good middle-class jobs. The Investment Canada Act provides for a review of significant international investments to ensure that they are of an overall net economic benefit to Canada. Yes, a security review is part of that process.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear, under the Liberal government, that Canada is open to business with the Chinese Communist Party. The government approved the sale of Norsat without a security review and despite the concerns of our American allies. The Prime Minister's hand-picked ambassador to China recently said that China has more in common with Canada than we do with the United States.

When will the Liberal government start taking security concerns seriously, and when will it extend the period of time on the Aecon sale to allow Canadian employers to have their say?

**Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Investment Canada Act provides for a multistep review in all of these cases, which are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. It is a rigorous process in which we rely, as a government, on our national security experts. We believe in them. We have confidence in them. It is interesting that the opposition does not seem to have confidence in our national security review people.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne has given the government an ultimatum. It is demanding additional funding to improve conditions in official language minority communities. It is time for the Liberals to prove that they will do more than just pay lip service to official languages. They make promises but do not keep them.

When will the government walk the talk and agree to the communities' funding demands?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, francophone communities, and the government agree on four points: first, there was no reinvestment under the Harper government; second, francophone communities across the country need the federal government's support; third, there will be a new official languages action plan; and fourth, everything must be in place in two months' time, when the roadmap expires.

[*English*]

#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has taken two years, a million dollars in legal fees, and four non-compliance orders for the Prime Minister to finally accept the ruling of systemic discrimination against first nation children in foster care. In that time we have lost so many young people, like Tammy Keeash, Courtney Scott, and Kanina Sue Turtle.

I thank the minister for pushing cabinet for compliance, and we will work with her, but we have heard these promises before. She needs to give us the dollar figure. How much have they been ordered to retroactively reimburse, and what will it take to end this shortfall and end this discrimination once and for all?

**Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his commitment to work with us on this extremely important issue. Our government is firmly committed to addressing the severe overrepresentation of indigenous children in child welfare in this country. To that end, we sent a letter today to 105 child and family services agencies in the country to instruct them that we are pleased to respond to all the costs related to prevention services for children, not only going forward but over the past two years.

I am also pleased to report that the tribunal noted that they were delighted to read of Canada's commitment and openness, and—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

\* \* \*

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain pipeline is on life support. The British Columbia government is throwing up regulatory roadblocks, threatening to terminate this project. Canadian jobs and the economy are at risk. We are already witnessing Canadian oil and gas companies fleeing to the U.S., where recent investments in that sector are into the tens of billions of dollars. Despite all this, the Prime Minister chooses to look the other way.

When the Prime Minister is in Alberta today, will he commit to fight the B.C. government and ensure that this important project gets built?

• (1455)

**Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member knows that we actually approved the pipeline, and we approved the pipeline because of the thousands of jobs it will create—

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Just like we approved northern gateway?

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** Order. We had a question. It is time to have the answer and not for everyone to talk at the same time as the answer is being given, whether one likes it or not.

The Minister of Natural Resources has the floor.

**Hon. Jim Carr:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that this government understands the importance of opening up export markets for Canadian crude. He knows, at the same time, that we announced an investment of \$1.5 billion in the ocean protection plan. He probably knows that we are in constant conversation with indigenous communities up and down the line to ensure safety. What he may not know is that the Prime Minister of Canada, in Edmonton this morning, said—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry, but we will have to wait for that.

The hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the minister mentions what the PM said in Edmonton, today on CBC Radio One Edmonton, in response to what actions the PM could take to get the Kinder Morgan built, this was his response, verbatim: “Ah, you know well, it’s still early on [on] this, and uh we’re still uh, we’re still moving forward the way we always planned”. What does that even mean? Is that leadership? When will the Prime Minister stand up to the B.C. NDP and get this project built?

**Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister said was, “we’re going to get that pipeline built.” The reason he said that, as he has said from the very first day this government took office, is that the environment and the economy go hand in hand.

We are creating jobs for British Columbians, for Albertans, and for all Canadians. We are expanding our export markets. We are working with indigenous people.

The environment, indigenous partnerships, and jobs: those are the three pillars that drive the policy of this government. That pipeline will be built.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is completely out of touch with the reality of producers. Farmers already have to deal with unpredictable weather and markets, and now they have to deal with the Liberals' improvised approach.

The Liberals treat farmers as though they are tax cheats. They implemented a program that pits farmers against each other to modernize their farms. Canada reached a deal on the TPP nine days ago, but the Liberals have still not announced a mitigation plan.

The previous Conservative government put \$4 billion on the table.

What is the Liberals' plan for dairy, egg, and poultry farmers?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The first thing that I did following the announcement of the CPTPP was to meet with farmers to chart a path forward and to work together. That was very well received by farmers.

Let us remember what this agreement means for Canadians. For the agricultural industry, it represents a market of over 500 million consumers, or 14% of the world economy. When negotiating this agreement, we protected key sectors, such as the automotive and agricultural industries. This is a good agreement for Canadians and for Canada's agricultural industry.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADA POST**

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during our government's review of Canada Post, Canadians in Mississauga East—Cooksville, and from coast to coast to coast, made it clear that they value the important services this Canadian institution provides. Last week I was happy to join the minister for an important announcement on the future of Canada Post at its largest distribution hub, which is located in my riding. Can the minister please update this House and all Canadians on our government's new vision for the renewal of Canada Post?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for the question and for his work on this file.

Our government was proud to announce a new vision for Canada Post that puts service to Canadians front and centre. We are taking immediate action to implement this vision, including terminating the community mailbox conversion program, enhancing the accessible delivery program, reinvesting profits in services and innovation, promoting remittance services, and renewing Canada Post's leadership.

We made this promise to Canadians, and we have kept our promise.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after dedicating his life to the Canadian Armed Forces, Vice-Admiral Mark Norman's career has been put on hold for over a year. The Prime Minister himself approved his suspension and publicly predicted that his case was going to end up in court, without offering any explanation at all.

Ontario judge Kevin Phillips wrote that Vice-Admiral Norman was carrying out responsibilities expected of an officer of his rank.

Why is the Prime Minister politically interfering in Vice-Admiral Norman's case and denying him his right, yes, his right to due process by taking so long?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member very well knows, this issue is under investigation. It would be irresponsible for me to comment on this at this time.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Salaberry—Suroît are leading the way. They came together to discuss ways to start a true green shift. Meanwhile, the government is following a greenhouse gas reduction plan that has no scientific basis.

Even the environment commissioner and the OECD say the government is not going to reach its target of reducing GHG emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030.

When will we see concerted action? When will we see major investments being made in areas like public transit and green building in order to build a green economy?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. The NDP fails to understand that we can grow the economy while tackling climate change. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party has members who deny the existence of climate change.

We know that we can move forward and fight climate change while growing our economy. That is what we need to do to create good jobs, and that is what we need to do for our children and our children's children.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of International Trade announced a free trade agreement with 10 other Pacific nations called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP.

Would the minister tell us how the Constantin family and other family businesses in Saint-Eustache that operate sugar shacks and produce maple products can benefit from this new agreement?

[English]

Our maple industry puts more money in the pockets of producers and helps grow our middle class.

[Translation]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

This trade agreement will open up doors for producers across Quebec and all across the country, whether it is beef, pork, grain, or our world-class maple syrup products. In Japan alone, tariffs of 70.5% on Canadian maple syrup and maple sugar will be eliminated in three years.

This will create more growth and more opportunities for our maple industry, put more money in the pockets of our producers, and help more people join the middle class.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pro-democracy media in China are speculating that Canada's ambassador has suffered a blow to the head. John McCallum bizarrely claimed that we have more in common with Beijing than our democratic allies.

The Government of China has absolutely no regard for human rights. Do the Liberals not know that human rights defenders, lawyers, and activists are routinely arrested and tortured, that Christian churches are being demolished, Uighur Muslims are being viciously oppressed, and dissidents' organs are being harvested?

Can the Prime Minister explain which of these policies he and his ambassador have in common with the Chinese government?

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, China is one of the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world. Not engaging with that market would simply be unrealistic. However, we always do so standing up for Canadian values. That is because the promotion and protection of human rights is a core element of all our engagements, domestic and foreign. We never have and we never will hesitate to raise human rights concerns with our Chinese counterparts. We do that at every opportunity, any time there is a human rights concern Canada has in the world.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MARIJUANA**

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, try to follow the logic here because somebody was definitely on something when they wrote the marijuana bill. The Liberals say it is true that tax havens can finance the pot industry. They say we will have to rely on Quebec's Autorité des marchés financiers to make sure profits are not going to organized crime. The problem is that, as the Liberals are well aware, the Autorité des marchés financiers does not know the identity of those who invest in tax havens.

Will the government delay bringing its bill into force and take the time to make sure organized crime and Liberal cronies are not the ones benefiting?

• (1505)

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said repeatedly, under the regulations that will flow from this legislation, security clearances will be mandatory for individuals who occupy key positions in any organization as well as background checks on significant investors who hold more than 25% of a cannabis company.

*Government Orders*

In addition, the Minister of Finance and his provincial counterparts have come to an agreement to demonstrate how we will all know what corporations are owned by whom.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, can the minister assure me that there will be an investigation into the dirty money flowing from the Cayman Islands and that the government will make sure organized crime is not behind it? Based on his answer just now, that is my understanding. I just want to be sure I have understood correctly.

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our concern with respect to organized crime has been a motivating factor behind this legislation from the very beginning. We want to stop the flow of illegal cash to crime organizations and we certainly want to make sure that none of that cash is invested in Canadian cannabis operations.

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**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Paul Quassa, Premier of Nunavut, and the Honourable Robert McLeod, Premier of the Northwest Territories.

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

I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the winners of the Arctic Inspiration Prize. These eight teams from across Canada's Arctic are recognized for their innovative projects to improve the quality of life in their communities.

**The Speaker:** The winning teams are the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Project; Dene Heroes Publication Project; the Unaaq Men's Association of Inukjuak; Our Families, Our Way: The Peacemaking Circle; Rivers to Ridges; Rankin Rock Hockey Camp; North in Focus: Nunavut, Our Land, Our People; and The Qajaq Program.

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

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is our first week back after the Christmas break and the government House leader has been on her feet a lot, answering a lot of questions, though not really answering them, but I have a lot of faith that it is about to change right now.

I want to ask the government House leader if she could please share with us what business the government has for the rest of today and next week.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the opposition House leader for her good work this week and welcome a third new House leader to the team.

This afternoon, we will continue debate on Bill C-50, political financing, at report stage. We will return to this debate tomorrow, as well as next week, on Monday and Wednesday.

[Translation]

I would like to inform the House that next Tuesday and Thursday will be allotted days.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1510)

[English]

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

The House resumed from consideration of Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions has four and a half minutes remaining in his speech.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when we left off before the welcome and scintillating interruption of question period, I was talking about the comments of acting Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs meeting on Bill C-50. It is quite clear from Mr. Perrault's testimony at committee that he felt Bill C-50 is accomplishing the goal that it set out to do, which is to make political financing more transparent for Canadians.

Last fall, I wrote a letter to the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, regarding his own fundraising activities. I wrote to him after reports surfaced that he was refusing to disclose his own fundraisers and keeping his fundraising activities hidden from Canadians. What was deeply concerning was that his party's senior spokesperson initially denied that the Leader of the Opposition had attended a private fundraiser, but after being presented with evidence to the contrary, the Conservative Party of Canada finally acknowledged that its leader had in fact held a private fundraiser.

It was, frankly, astounding that his initial defence to this was to state that he does not believe he should be held to the same standard as the Prime Minister. I felt obliged, in the letter, to remind him that he is also a public office holder and aspires to be Prime Minister and, as the leader of a party, he has the responsibility to uphold the highest of standards. To date, I have not received a reply to my letter. No pen pal is he. On this side of the House, we are deeply disappointed that the official opposition does not feel the need to support this legislation, when it claims to value openness and transparency in political fundraising.



*Government Orders*

Regrettably, it is not just the Conservatives who are refusing to be open and transparent about their fundraising. The new NDP leader is also refusing to disclose higher-value fundraisers that he attends. We know that he attended such fundraisers when he was a candidate for leadership, but now will not follow the Liberal Party's open and transparent example.

In addition to Bill C-50, the Minister of Democratic Institutions is working diligently to ensure that more Canadians have the ability to exercise their right to vote. We are expanding the voting franchise to more Canadians by reversing elements of the previous government's so-called Fair Elections Act, which actually made voting more difficult and resulted in fewer Canadians getting to the polls.

[*Translation*]

If passed, this bill will enable Canadians to vote more easily and in greater numbers while strengthening the integrity of our electoral system and people's trust in that system.

[*English*]

The issue of cybersecurity has never been more important. In accordance with her mandate letter from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Democratic Institutions presented a threat assessment from the Communications Security Establishment, or CSE, to analyze the risks to Canada's political and electoral activities from hackers.

The Minister of Democratic Institutions also has a mandate to bring forward options to create an independent commission or commissioner to organize political party leaders' debates during future federal elections. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is currently studying this and has gathered valuable feedback from witnesses and stakeholders with interest and expertise in this aspect of Canadian democracy. The Minister of Democratic Institutions shared her own views on this important issue with the committee last fall. Additionally, the minister and I recently completed a cross-Canada tour to meet with stakeholders to hear their thoughts on how a commission or commissioner could be established to organize federal leaders' debates.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

We also invite all Canadians to share their views on the future of leaders' debates in Canada by visiting the Democratic Institutions website by February 9, 2018.

[*English*]

Be assured that our government, this minister, and I will never stop working to further protect, strengthen, and improve our democracy, which I hope will be with the help of all members of the House, and to acknowledge that better is always possible.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that speech reminded me of one of my favourite Fleetwood Mac songs.

The member said that voter turnout went down after the Fair Elections Act was brought in. Maybe the member knows that the turnout in 2011 was 61.4%. Voter turnout in the 2015 election was 68.5%, a more than 7% increase. When it comes to giving speeches

and relating facts in speeches, I would agree with the member that better is always possible.

He said that the leader of the official opposition should follow rules that the Prime Minister does not follow and never has. I would ask the member if he thinks it is reasonable for ministers to attend private fundraisers with the stakeholders they regulate, a minister of justice attending a fundraising with aspirants to the bench, for example. Is it reasonable for ministers to do that, or should the ministers only do fundraising events outside of the context of private meetings with stakeholders?

Under the rules in the proposed legislation, the Prime Minister and ministers would still, and very much seem to intend to, continue with those kinds of fundraisers.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his great question and attention to this matter.

Of course, I must agree that voter turnout did increase in 2015, as Canadians were greatly motivated for a change in government and turned out in wonderful numbers. Sadly, the turnout among certain marginalized groups did in fact fall due to some undemocratic elements of the unfair elections act.

In response to his other question, we are taking concrete actions through this bill to improve our already strong and robust rules around political fundraising. For many Canadians, contributing to a political party and attending a fundraising event is an important form of democratic expression, and we are pleased to be able to debate this important piece of legislation in the House.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure my friend heard the previous question, which is strange because I thought it was pretty straightforward.

When a minister of the crown, justice minister or finance minister, holds a fundraiser and people who have business with the government attend that fundraiser, people who have certain aspirations with that particular minister and that minister's office, while Bill C-50 has improvements on transparency, it would do nothing to prevent that activity. Therefore, the finance minister could continue to meet with Bay Street executives and raise money from them. The justice minister could continue to meet with lawyers who are seeking appointment to the bench and raise money from them. The Prime Minister can meet with people, or vacation on their islands from time to time, who have direct dealings with the government under this proposed legislation. That stays perfectly fine.

The member might wish to address that. If he is comfortable with it, then he should just simply say so. If he is not, then why did the Liberals not address it in the bill?

My specific question is on clause 4 of the proposed legislation, which has a loophole that would allow anyone who is donating to any of the parties to show up at conventions, drop \$1,550 at the convention, and simply not be reported publicly. It seems like a loophole the Liberals would want to close. We tried to. We are trying to do it now at report stage.

*Government Orders*

Does my friend not agree that, first, ministers should not have that conflict of interest through their fundraising activities; and second, that this glaring limo-loophole that the Liberals baked into this proposed legislation should be closed?

**Mr. Andy Fillmore:** Mr. Speaker, my friend for Skeena—Bulkley Valley described in his question the state of political fundraisers as they have been for many successive governments over many years. It is important that with Bill C-50 we are improving on that. We are making it much better. We are taking concrete action to improve our already strong and robust rules around political fundraising. However, as I said before, contributing to political parties and attending fundraising events is an important part of democratic expression for Canadians.

With regard to the proposed amendment at report stage to delete clause 4, that is actually the implementation of one of the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations, A36 I believe, which would increase transparency and openness in our fundraising regime.

I welcome the member's comments and hard work, and I look forward to working with him as we pass Bill C-50.

• (1520)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoy this debate because a lot of Canadians look toward elected office, toward politics, and sometimes they have to then look away again, because some of the activities, both in reality and that portrayed through movies and such, do not accurately reflect what many of us are trying to do in politics, which is to simply represent people to the best of our ability.

The timing of Bill C-50 was interesting. It landed just after the Liberals broke their promise on electoral reform. We all remember it well because the Prime Minister repeated it so often before, during, and after the last election that 2015 was going to be the last election under first past the post.

Just a few days ago, he gave an interview here in the Library of Parliament to the CBC where he said, "Nobody was able to convince me". Not all of the experts, not the tens of thousands of Canadians were able to personally convince him that what all the evidence pointed toward was a good thing for Canada. In his not humble opinion of himself, he needed that convincing that none of the evidence was enough on changing our system and evolving it into the 21st century. The timing of the bill was interesting.

We also see within Bill C-50, which is broadly-speaking supported by my colleagues, myself, and the New Democrats in terms of the listing of donors beyond \$200. It is subjecting the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, party leaders, and those aspiring to become party leaders to a higher level of disclosure.

Of course, all of this comes about because of Liberal fundraisers. The idea of the bill was borne out of the crisis of Liberal cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister himself holding secret fundraisers in private homes of billionaires and millionaires, where there was no accountability at all. The justice minister and finance minister were actually holding meetings that were fundraisers, \$1,000, \$1,500 to get in the door, and the people being invited to these meetings had direct dealings with these cabinet minister's departments. Just screaming conflict of interest all over the place.

The fact that the Prime Minister was then later found to have broken four of our ethical rules of Parliament by accepting a trip with the Aga Khan, who the Government of Canada has had long dealings with, showed a moral and ethical code that was completely warped within the Liberal leadership. My grandmother used to say, "Don't ever waste a good crisis". If there is a problem, do not just simply have the crisis and then forget about it, and Bill C-50 is the result of Liberals going through the very public and political exposure of their ethical compass being totally off from what most ordinary Canadians would see as right behaviour.

The Minister of Justice should never, ever be accepting donations of any kind from lawyers who are also on the list of joining the bench. Why? Because it is the Justice Minister who is ultimately going to approve their ascension to that bench and become a judge. It seems obvious to me and to most people who have that kind of ethical core, but it was not obvious to the Liberals.

The finance minister should not be meeting with Bay Street executives, and accepting large donations from the very same people over which he is the regulator. He is the ref. He is the one who is supposed to be making it fair for everyone, not just those who can pay the \$1,500 and get into his private fundraiser. However, Liberals did not see a problem with this.

The Prime Minister was holding private fundraisers in the homes of wealthy billionaires, so that millionaires could show up and give him \$1,550, and then have dealings with some of their very specific issues that went ahead.

All of this was borne out of the Liberals, and this is not easy to do all the time. They were embarrassed. It is not always easy to embarrass a Liberal, but it happened. The result of this is Bill C-50, which says we now have to publicly declare who is showing up. Wait, the Liberals wanted to leave themselves a loophole, the Laurier Club loophole. If people donate to the Liberal Party to the maximum amount, particularly at a convention, under the bill their names do not appear. How fortunate is that, that the five-day declaration that exists under Bill C-50, if the maximum donation to the Liberal Party is made at the convention, then people do not have to worry about it.

The only filings that come out are the filings that come out right now which is when end of the year reporting happens. All of this transparency stops right at the door of the Laurier Club, this special donor elite club that the Liberals have set up to make sure the money keeps coming in from their top donors. We tried to close it. As New Democrats, we do not just want to oppose, we want to propose.

*Government Orders*

●(1525)

We asked why they put this loophole in. It accomplishes nothing. It does not help in terms of transparency, and it seems to be almost handwritten by the chief Liberal fundraiser to say, “Do not embarrass anybody by having to put them on a public list when they show up at our conventions as Liberals, and donate the maximum amounts.” We said to fix this.

We also said to allow the Chief Electoral Officer investigative powers. It seems about right that the person who guides our elections, and tries to make sure our elections are done fairly should have investigative powers. We moved amendments to allow that to happen.

In fact, we heard from a former Chief Electoral Officer about the \$1,000 penalty that exists within this bill that was done away in the nineties. It was seen as a non-deterrent, because there are large incentives to do these sketchy fundraisers, as the Liberals have proven. A person can make a lot of money. If there were a penalty on it, one would think the penalty would be more than \$1,000, which is far less than the maximum donation someone could make at these potentially illegal fundraising events.

Through all of this, we see the intention of the government. We see that the Liberals want to bring more openness to these private, very exclusive fundraisers, where people in some cases are giving a great deal of money. We welcome that.

We would like the Liberals to show a little of that contrition that is so hard to find around here, and to acknowledge that it was borne out of the controversy surrounding the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet who were engaging in fundraisers that were suspicious, at best, if not unethical. We would also like the Liberals to acknowledge the central problem.

What Canadians, and specifically the people who I represent in northern British Columbia, say is that there should not be privileged access for those who have money. The wealthy and the well-connected should not simply get FaceTime with the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers, who have so much power under our system, simply because they are rich. Yet, this bill maintains all of that.

Nothing is actually done about the elephant in the room walking around, which is if someone is loaded, he or she can get personal one-on-one time with the Prime Minister, and virtually anyone in his cabinet, to move agendas forward, to say he or she knows the person, and use that for their own personal advantage. That is all maintained. None of that so-called tradition is threatened at all by this. We wondered just how far the Liberals were willing to go, and we found out.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-50 aims to address certain aspects of the problem of rather unethical donations. The Liberals have made an effort. We will support most of the elements of this bill, but there are some things that need improvement, going by the testimony we heard in committee. The Liberals, however, have ignored and rejected every amendment proposed by the NDP to improve their bill. That is that party's new attitude, now that they are in government. When they were in opposition, it was different.

[*English*]

In conclusion, the aspects of Bill C-50, on the whole, accomplish a stepping up of transparency. The concern we have is with regard to cash for access, that tradition where if one has a lot of money, one will get personal time with the Prime Minister. The Liberals will now jump up and say, “Oh, but he does town halls.” Congratulations. We all do town halls. Good for him. There is nothing wrong with that.

However, the Liberals still have the tendency where if someone has a lot of money, he or she does not have to line up for a town hall to sit in the crowd, and maybe ask a question. If one has \$1,550 to donate to the Liberal Party, then the Liberals will get that person FaceTime and that sacred selfie, and make sure he or she has time with whichever minister is chosen, right up to the Prime Minister.

The Liberals maintain that practice, and they allow a loophole in this bill, which they are well aware of, that will make these very large donations not be transparent if they take place at a Liberal convention. That is a missed opportunity. However, like so many opportunities when it comes to ethical behaviour, the Liberals are only too happy to sit on their hands and miss them.

●(1530)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, members will recall that after the last election in 2015, then Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand produced a report. That report was characterized by a number of recommendations on how we might do better in this place.

One recommendation, A36, of the report said we should “make leadership and nomination financial transactions fully transparent and the political financing regime applicable to contestants more coherent.” That recommendation, A36, is implemented in Bill C-50 in clause 4.

However, in a puzzling motion that the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley put on the floor, the implementation of recommendation A36 would be deleted. What is even more puzzling is that members from all parties of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs unanimously supported the recommendation from CEO Marc Mayrand.

Could the member help us understand why he would like to eliminate from Bill C-50 the implementation of the CEO's recommendation around transparency?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that our amendment would strike out the clause which allows the Liberal Party to continue to fundraise in secret essentially, as long as it takes place at a convention.

We have asked a number of Liberals, both at committee and here in the House, why we have this loophole. I have yet to hear from my friend, the parliamentary secretary or any other Liberal, the rationale for why, if a donation is sent to the Liberal Party in a cheque for \$1,550, or they show up at an event, that is made public, but if that event takes place at the Liberal convention, then it is not made public. It makes no sense.

*Government Orders*

The exercise is the same. If they are trying to be transparent, then be transparent. We know many of the top level Liberal donors choose to make their donations at the Liberal Party convention for various reasons, and one of them is if they are members of the Laurier Club, they get private time with the Prime Minister. That is convenient. Again, cash for access is the problem.

This goes toward moving some transparency to the issue, but the Liberals keep loopholes in place that make no sense at all and have no justification. Not once have I heard a Liberal member be able to defend it. At some point they are going to have to square that circle, probably well after this bill is passed into law.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his speech, and for reminding us of this horrific, for me particularly and for many Canadians, anniversary of the February 1 breaking of the promise on electoral reform. I will have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-50 in a few moments, so forgive me for asking a question on electoral reform of my colleague.

The Prime Minister says that no one was able to convince him. I have been racking my brains. I know this issue well, and I know the Prime Minister well. I do not know of a single person who was ever given the opportunity to try to convince him, an opportunity to sit down and listen to the evidence, have it presented to him.

Does my hon. colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley know of any opportunities that were afforded either to members of his party or any other experts, or anyone at all? If we failed to convince him, I would like to have thought we had a chance.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, the quotes from the Prime Minister today are rather astounding.

It is revelatory for me and for many others, that lo and behold, through all of the conversations that went on for months, the tens of thousands of Canadians participating in town halls, online surveys, engaging in good faith with the electoral reform committee and parliamentarians, some of which were Liberal held events, where the majority came out saying they wanted proportional representation, that all of that conversation never got to the Prime Minister.

All the evidence that was brought forward from virtually every democratic expert we have in this country, and many of the leading global experts, showed that proportional representation leads to more women being elected, more diverse parliaments being elected, and better outcomes in terms of economic, environmental, and social legislation. All of that evidence never made its way to the Prime Minister's mind.

He somehow closed and cloistered himself off from this. That is his argument now. That, coupled with the fact that he felt it was his decision and his decision alone to make. That is just not true.

I do not know how Liberals actually maintain this. I know a number of my Liberal colleagues were greatly disturbed by the betrayal of the promise that was oft repeated by this Prime Minister and by them. It is just unfortunate. I think it is unbecoming, frankly, of a Prime Minister who is an intelligent person to suggest that he just simply was not convinced, that no single expert, no single Canadian was ever able to get through to his mind that the leading

forms of voting that most of the successful democracies around the world employ would be somehow suitable for Canada.

• (1535)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise at report stage to deal with Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act in dealing with fundraising.

I had the opportunity before committee to attempt to make amendments to the bill. Certainly there was excellent testimony from many expert witnesses, particularly from our former chief electoral officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley, of ways in which the bill could be strengthened.

The bill generally makes improvements. It is not that it is a bad bill; it is that there are lost opportunities here, particularly lost opportunities in closing those loopholes around what is now known as cash for access.

Let me speak to the bill, and then I will turn my attention to the fundamental problem we have in Canada when we talk about political fundraising. That is a more general conversation.

On Bill C-50, I put forward Green Party amendments and had them voted on, but unfortunately they were all defeated. They may be seen by some as relatively minor, but they matter. For example, one was mentioned by my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley. I attempted to increase substantially the punishment for violating any of the provisions around notice, publicity, reporting, and so on. Section 500 of the act would be amended to create a penalty of not more than \$1,000.

The evidence from Jean-Pierre Kingsley, our former chief electoral officer, was:

The \$1,000 penalty for a summary conviction, I found to be low. The entities that would be charged are entities...that effectively have money or should pay more for that. I don't think there's anything left that's a penalty of \$1,000 under the statute...we're certainly not talking about a deterrent. The deterrent of course is the summary conviction, but still there should be a penalty.

In the amendment I put forward, I hoped to see that if the party broke the rules, that it would be dealing with a penalty of twice the amount of what the party raised at that event. That would become a significant deterrent because it would undo all the damage of its event. The party would have to pay twice as much as was raised as a penalty.

I also, like the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, agree that it is a loophole in section 4 of the act. One does not have to report at all on fundraising and donations made in the course of a national convention. We know a lot of fundraising goes there and should be reported.

*Government Orders*

The bill certainly does not make things any worse. The problem with this, the notion of cash for access and the way it is described, is that until someone dubbed it cash for access and ascribed to it a label nobody would want, this is how political parties of all stripes have always raised money. The star performer, the leader of the party or someone else who is well-known in the party is someone people want to meet, comes to an event. That is the draw to get other people to show up and spend a lot of money. I usually like to joke that in the Green Party it is not so much that we have cash for access, it is that I show up in people's homes for potluck suppers, so our provisions are basically tofu for access.

The situation of political party financing makes setting up a series of rules that cover all eventualities, sort of a mug's game. I would rather attack this directly. When will we take the leap other countries have and eliminate private financing for political parties? I know that goes contrary to the direction of the previous government, which said it was getting rid of taxpayer funding for political parties but really did not. Taxpayers fund political parties to a great extent in our country. It is just not sufficient to meet the perceived needs of the parties, which is why they go forward and do all these other kinds of fundraising.

Our system of democracy would be cleaner and everything would be much more above board if it were a fair, impartial system of public financing. For those who might not know how taxpayers fund political parties, certainly everyone in this chamber knows, there are very generous rebates for the amount of money spent during an election campaign. If the party gets more than 10% per riding, it gets back 50% of what it spent. Nationally it gets back 60%.

• (1540)

For the party that spends the most on attack ads, for instance, in other words the party that annoys the Canadian public the most with attack ads during the Super Bowl, its rebate is the largest just because it spent the most. The biggest-spending parties get the most back from the Canadian public because that is our Elections Canada rebate rule.

What if we do not do that anymore? What if we say we will just provide a pot of money based on what we have seen on average over the last five elections that the Canadian public has spent on having those elections, what we actually gave to political parties, and develop a fair system of sharing that out? What if we did what England does, what Brazil does, and what many countries do and ban electronic advertising, radio and T.V. for political parties? That is the biggest ticket item in the spending budgets of most political parties during elections, to have money in the bank to run all those ads. What if television ads from political parties were not allowed, but every party was given non-profit, public broadcasting time on a fair and equal basis?

One thing about attack ads that we will never see is someone running for office doing his or her own ominous voice overs. The attack ad bread and butter is that so and so plans to steal babies, that it has been heard here, or so and so beats kittens or something loathsome like that. When people are on-screen, looking at the Canadian public, they do not say things like that. They say that they are standing there because they want to serve the people or their

platforms are about people's lives, their families, and communities. They want to say the positive things when it is their own face.

Public funding and public provision of public interest broadcasting for political parties instead of paid advertisements would save the taxpayers a bundle because we would not be paying back for all that ad time in the proportions that political parties now receive under the Elections Act. We then could also look back at what the provisions were before former prime minister Stephen Harper reversed them.

The fairest and the least cost support of political parties from the public purse was always Jean Chrétien's innovation of the per vote subsidy. It is an incentive to vote, by the way. I have had people say to me over the years, when this existed, that they lived in a safe riding for the Grits or Tories, a party they did not want. Therefore, the only reason they voted was because they knew the \$1.75 would go to the party for which they had voted. That amount changed eventually when the Harper administration killed it. I think it had gone up to \$2 a vote, but it was \$2 a year to the party that individuals voted for, directed by their votes.

We do not get to direct at all other taxpayer funding of political parties. The biggest one is the rebates for election spending. The second-biggest one is the rebate for the income tax deduction people get, which is so much more generous than donating to Oxfam, or Sierra Club or a church. All of their charitable giving to other organizations is never rebated at the highest level, but to give \$400 to a political party costs people \$100. Of course, it is obvious why the rules benefit political parties. They were written by people in this place to assist their parties.

Is it not time we pulled the plug on all of it, and not worry about whether someone is meeting with donors in someone's fancy house or meeting with people at a potluck supper? All of this is driven because we are not willing to bite the bullet and do for our democracy what is really required, which is to take the money out of it and allow the Canadian public, based on what we are already spending, to have election campaigns and funding for political parties directed by a fair and equitable formula.

Bill C-50 can only go as far as it can go. There is always going to be a loophole. We are always going to find out that somebody is a big enough draw that he or she will get donors in the room. Let us not forget that was why Senator Mike Duffy was appointed. He was a good fundraiser because people wanted to write the big cheques to go into the room to meet him. We need to think about what motivates our democracy and get the money out of it by going to the real root of the problem.

I ask my colleagues on that side of the House to bring back the per vote subsidy. It was fair and directed by the voter. Take big money out of politics.

*Government Orders*

• (1545)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for her ongoing care and attention to democratic institutions in Canada.

I would like to dwell on the section of her remarks regarding conventions. Any fundraiser within a convention for which a person walks through a door and pays over \$200 to spend time with the class of folks we already have identified would be captured by the new rules. Therefore, that kind of event is not exempt at a convention. What would be exempt under Bill C-50 is the kind of appreciation event for folks who have already paid a convention fee and will be present there.

To that, our acting chief electoral officer Stéphane Perrault said at PROC committee:

There is also an important exception for party conventions, including leadership conventions, except where a fundraising activity takes place within the convention. The convention itself is exempted, but if there's a fundraiser that meets all the conditions within the convention, then that is caught by the new rules. Again, this reflects a concern to achieve a proper balance and I think it is wise.

Could the member reflect on the CEO's statement that it does actually capture a good balance?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I have read proposed section 4 over and over again. Perhaps it is bad drafting, which is a terrible thing to say at the point where we are at report stage. However, despite proposed subsection 3, a regulated fundraising event does not include any event that is part of a convention and is organized to express appreciation. Therefore, it could be organized to express appreciation, but that kind of event does indeed give access to key decision makers, which does not end up getting reported and is not open to the media.

Even after hearing the explanation from the acting chief electoral officer, which I have heard before, I am baffled by his position. Of course, I respect him, but in the context of what Bill C-50 is trying to deal with, special access for people with lots of money to key decision makers, the exemption for conventions does not sit right with me. I am hearing what my hon. colleague is saying, but I am not persuaded.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about missed opportunities in the legislation and the hidden costs that not many taxpayers were aware of when it came to financing political parties.

One of the other big loopholes is the fact that under our current legislation, there is no hard limit on the length a campaign can be. We all know from 2015, with its 78-day campaign and the changes that were made by the previous Conservative government, it ballooned the cost to taxpayers. Not only did the election cost \$443 million, but it allowed parties to spend huge amounts more, therefore, getting even more tax breaks.

I proposed a private member's bill to put a hard cap on the length of elections. I would be curious to hear my hon. colleague's thoughts on that, which is probably another missed opportunity the House could be looking at.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, we also have another really important piece of electoral reform legislation that has received first

reading in this place, but has not yet gone to committee, which is Bill C-33. It would do away with a lot of what was done under the previous administration's, what we called, the unfair elections act. It has a lot of really good provisions in it to bring back the rights of the Chief Electoral Officer to communicate with Canadians and educate Canadians. It has a really cool provision to allow young people at age 16 to be registered to vote, so they are already registered by the time they turn 18. I would love to see something in there, and we could go back to that when it gets to committee. What former Prime Minister Harper did in the unfair elections act was create, for the first time, additional money, depending on how long the writ lasted.

We had a very long writ period in 2005. My friends here with the memory will remember that on November 28, 2005, the Liberal government of Paul Martin fell, but the election was not until later in January. There was the feeling that between Christmas and Hanukkah there had to be some time allotted. However, that was in the days before we had additional spending limits during a writ period. Stephen Harper changed it so parties could get more money back by having a longer writ period. That election campaign went from August 3 to late October.

I agree entirely with my friend. I do not know that we want to put a hard cap on the length of an election. There may be reasons we would want to extend it, like if a government falls right before Christmas, as in the case of the November 28, 2005, fall of the government. However, we need to ensure that long writ periods are not an excuse to get more money from taxpayers because the game has already been rigged so parties can spend more money and get more money. The party that had the most money at the time engineered those changes.

• (1550)

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and debate the important pieces of legislation that come before us.

Before I do so, if the House will give me a brief indulgence, I would like to thank and congratulate everyone who was involved in yesterday's launch of the third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, now lovingly referred to as Bosc and Gagnon. Like all members, I spent last night going page by page through this exciting document. It was a real page-turner. I made it to page 1324, and I look forward to finishing the rest of it tonight. It is a great accomplishment.

**An hon. member:** Get a life.

**Mr. John Nater:** My colleague is telling me to get a life.

It is an excellent piece of work. I am thankful to all those involved. It will stand the test of time as an important document.

Let us go to the subject at hand, Bill C-50.

*Government Orders*

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands briefly mentioned in her comments Bill C-33, and I was intrigued today in question period when the Minister of Democratic Institutions mentioned Bill C-33. In fact, I will quote her from the blues. She said, “My job is to strengthen and protect our democratic institutions and ensure they represent the values of Canadians. Through the introduction of Bill C-33 and Bill C-50, we are moving to accomplish that mandate.”

How important is Bill C-33 to the government? It received first reading on November 24, 2016, 14 months ago. Where is that bill today? It still sits at first reading, having never been brought forward for second reading. This is reflective of the entire government's legislative agenda. It introduces certain pieces of legislation to great fanfare, yet there they sit 14 months later, unmoved, at the same stage as they were when they were first introduced. This is reflective of the entire government's agenda, but most particularly of the democratic institutions' agenda.

Let us contrast that with our former Conservative government's agenda. The very first piece of legislation introduced in 2006 was Bill C-2, the Federal Accountability Act. What did that do? It banned corporate donations and union donations, and placed a hard cap on the maximum that an individual could donate.

The Liberal government, in the introduction of Bill C-50, is simply trying to legitimize its cash for access events. It is trying to legitimize its pay-to-play events. It is trying to legitimize that which it should not have been doing in the first place, by its own rules and its own document “Open and Accountable Government”.

I would like to quote from this document. The prelude states:

Open and Accountable Government sets out core principles regarding the roles and responsibilities of Ministers in Canada's system of responsible parliamentary government.

Under Annex B, “Fundraising and Dealing with Lobbyists: Best Practices for Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries”, the very first paragraph states:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must avoid conflict of interest, the appearance of conflict of interest and situations that have the potential to involve conflicts of interest.

This legislation would not have been needed had the Prime Minister accepted his own words, and had he and his ministers followed their own document and simply done what they were asked to do.

It goes on to state:

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must ensure that political fundraising activities or considerations do not affect, or appear to affect, the exercise of their official duties or the access of individuals or organizations to government.

On this specific point, the Liberal government, the Prime Minister, and his cabinet have failed to live up to the standards that the Prime Minister himself set in “Open and Accountable Government”. The Prime Minister laid out his vision. He promised to be open and transparent, and then the Liberals broke their own rules.

This is not the first time we have seen this. We have seen it time and time again over the two years this government has been in office. The Liberals are constantly placing themselves in the appearance or potential of conflict of interest. All week in this House we have heard questions asking the Prime Minister and the

government House leader about the Prime Minister's unethical trip to the Aga Khan's island, for which he was found guilty on four separate counts under the Conflict of Interest Act.

• (1555)

The government, in only two short years, is achieving a level of ethics lapses that took the Chrétien-Martin Liberals a full 13 years to get to. It has accomplished that in two years.

Let us talk about this piece of legislation and some of the exemptions and exceptions that the government has brought forward in Bill C-50. There is one particular exception, what I like to call the Laurier Club loophole. This legislation applies to donor appreciation events, except when those events take place at conventions.

People may be wondering, what exactly is the Laurier Club? I have an answer. I went on the Liberal Party's website and found a little information about it. For the low price of \$1,500 a year, anyone can become a member of the Laurier Club.

• (1600)

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Wow, where do I sign up?

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Speaker, I believe people can sign up on the Liberal Party website.

What do people get for becoming members of the Laurier Club? They get this: “Invitations to Laurier Club events across the country, hearing from leading voices on our Liberal team”. They get access to senior members of the Liberal Party and the Liberal government. In fact, there is a Laurier Club event tonight in Edmonton. For those who are interested, I am sure there is still time to register for that event. My colleague from Edmonton West says that perhaps both Edmonton Liberals will show up at that event.

I find this interesting. Just last week, the chief of staff to the Minister of National Defence tweeted about the convention the Liberal Party is having later this year in Halifax. She said, “if there was a time to join Laurier Club, now is the time”. She was highlighting the Liberal convention.

I am sure we could all read different options into that, but I believe the testament there is very much that if people want to meet senior Liberals, they should join the Laurier Club and attend the national convention, and they will have access to senior decision-makers within the Liberal Party of Canada. That is accepted. It is exempted from this piece of legislation. The Laurier Club loophole allows that to happen.

There is another exception in this piece of legislation. I like to call this exception the Joe Volpe clause. It prohibits the publication of names of people under the age of 18. I know that all members of this House recall the 2006 Liberal leadership race and Joe Volpe's endeavours to raise money, including from those who were 11 years of age. In honour of Mr. Volpe, we should refer to that clause as the Joe Volpe clause.

I am not going to get into any clauses about those who have passed on. I believe that this would perhaps also be called the Joe Volpe clause, but it is not dealt with in this particular piece of legislation.

*Government Orders*

There is also a part of the legislation that requires five days' notice. The notice has to be placed on the website five days in advance. Publicizing these events is a positive step. It is not a bad thing. However, another loophole comes into place. There is no provision for a long-standing event to be sold to party members and encouraged, and then at the last minute, lo and behold, the Prime Minister is attending, under the five-day limit, or the Minister of Finance or another senior Liberal minister is attending the event within the five-day period.

There is no provision in the bill to remedy that. This is a matter that I brought up at the procedure and House affairs committee, and it was not dealt with in this legislation. While the minister and the government hold this piece of legislation out as a great step forward in openness and transparency, it is simply window dressing to cover up the Liberals' past cash for access events, their pay-to-play events, and their way of getting \$1,500 out of senior donors and high donors to their party and giving them access to senior people within the Liberal Party, including the Prime Minister.

This is unneeded. We will be voting against this piece of legislation. I am sure hon. members will join me in doing so.

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member for Perth—Wellington could share with the House why he feels that his party's leader should be entitled to such secretive fundraisers.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear. Our party and our leader follow the rules that are on the books and that are legislated by the House. The member opposite is talking about an event that took place several months ago, before this legislation was even dealt with by committee. It is like saying that the Magna Carta does not exist because King John was not given five days' notice of the event. We cannot retroactively legislate.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions is just trying to sling mud at our leader with his comments, because he and his party know that we are going to be working hard in the next two years and that in 2019 we will be forming the next government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. I would like to hear his comments on what seems to me to be a lamentable failure of Liberal promises regarding electoral reform and the Democratic Institutions file as a whole. The Liberals have almost no record to present. To date, the only accomplishment they can show Canadians since their election in 2015 is this bill, which is quite modest, not to say bad, given their promises.

What does my colleague think about the Liberal record on electoral reform and democratic institutions, when expectations were so high? After the 2015 election, expectations were very high that the Liberal government would produce results by the next election.

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his question. He is right, the Liberal government made a lot of promises during the 2015 election campaign, but did not keep them. The Liberals promised many things during the

election campaign, but did not follow through on them once they formed government.

Electoral reform is one example. The government created a committee of the House and said that the 2015 election would be the last election under first past the post. The Liberals said one thing and did the complete opposite. These are the same Liberals we have seen in the past. They have not changed.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague just referred to the first past the post electoral system.

[*English*]

It is not something that trips off the tongue easily even for the Québécois, but that is the current dysfunctional voting system we have.

I appreciate that the hon. member for Perth—Wellington raised, as I did, a really substantive piece of legislation. I do not know why Bill C-33 has been stalled for so long at first reading. I wonder if he could give me a sense of the reason.

The member for Perth—Wellington and I worked together on electoral reform on various committees. He is a sterling fellow. I do not want to put him on the spot on behalf of his whole party. Bill C-33 is trying to repair a lot of what many of us in the opposition at the time felt was damage to our electoral system. Does my colleague know the current intention, and how does he personally feel he will vote on Bill C-33?

**Mr. John Nater:** Mr. Speaker, the million-dollar question is, where is Bill C-33? It was introduced in November 2016, and yet here it is, stalled. There has been no debate at second reading. It has not even reached the point where we can get it to committee and discuss it. Our party is open to debating Bill C-33, but we have not been given the chance to debate it. It is sitting awaiting second reading, unmoved, unloved, completely stalled. I would have to ask the government, where is Bill C-33?

Where are so many other bills that the government has introduced and let sit stagnant on the Order Paper?

• (1605)

**Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing). This bill proposes amending the Canada Elections Act to bring an unprecedented level of openness and transparency to federal political fundraisers. The legislation is just one of many steps that we are taking as a government to raise the bar on transparency, accountability, and integrity of our public institutions and the democratic process.

The year 2017 marked the 35th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which was signed on a blustery day in April on the front lawn of Parliament just a few steps from where we are right now. Canadians cherish our charter and rightly so. It is a model for democracies around the world.



*Government Orders*

Section 3 of the charter guarantees every citizen the right to vote and to run in an election. This fundamental democratic right, guaranteed to all Canadians, is one of our most cherished civic rights. The simple act of voting is an exercise of democratic freedom that unites all of us as Canadians. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms also enshrines the freedoms of association and expression. Section 2 of the charter has been interpreted to include the right of Canadian citizens and permanent residents to make a donation to a party and to participate in fundraising activities. Of course, these rights are both subject to the reasonable limitations that might be imposed in a free and democratic society.

Political parties represent a vital part of our democratic system. They unite people from different parts of the country with a variety of different perspectives and backgrounds and experiences. Parties mobilize ordinary citizens to champion policies and ideas and they foster the kind of vigorous public debate about ideas that is at the heart of our healthy democracy. Voting in an election for a candidate is one of the ways Canadians play an active and engaged role in this society. We see this as an opportunity to make our country a better place for our children and our grandchildren. Some Canadians even choose to work or volunteer in a political party or a candidate's campaign, and for many of us here in this room, we probably know few people who do not. We engage all of our friends and family to help us in our political activities, and many of the people whom we meet are either our volunteers or people who work against us in campaigns.

It is true that it is a broad expanse of the Canadian population that participates in political activity at the municipal and provincial levels, and also here at the federal level, but not everyone has the time or inclination to become involved in politics in that respect. Still, people may want to have their voices heard, so for many Canadians, making a financial contribution to a political campaign is a meaningful way for them to play a direct role in our democracy. It is an important forum of democratic expression. Choosing to support a political party or a candidate is something we must continue to uphold and protect. Everyone in this place knows that donations given by people who believe in us, who believe in what we stand for and what our parties stand for, help make our work possible, and we must continue to ensure that Canadians are free to contribute to political parties and candidates openly and transparently.

It bears noting that Canada is known around the world for the rigour of its political financing regime. Donations from corporations and from unions are prohibited under the existing legislation. To further level the playing field, there are strict limits on the contributions an individual can make. Canadian citizens and permanent residents can each contribute a maximum this year of \$1,575 to each registered party. They can donate a total of \$1,575 to the leadership contestants in a particular contest. In addition, they can donate a total of \$1,575 to contestants for nomination, candidates, and/or riding associations of each registered party. Contributions are reported to Elections Canada and the name, municipality, province, and postal code of those who contribute more than \$200 are posted online.

Bill C-50 would build on this existing regime so that when a fundraising event requires an attendee to contribute or pay a ticket price totalling more than \$200, the name and partial address of each

attendee, with certain exceptions, would be published online. The exceptions are youth under 18, volunteers, event staff, media, someone assisting a person with a disability, and support staff for a minister or party leader in attendance.

Canadians take political financing seriously. There are significant consequences for disobeying the law, and that is why currently the Canada Elections Act provides tough sanctions for those who break the rules. Although Canadians can be proud of our already strict regulations for political financing, we recognize that they have a right to know even more and perhaps in a more timely fashion when it comes to political fundraising events. Bill C-50 aims to provide Canadians with more information quicker about political financing events in order to continue to enhance trust and confidence in our democratic institutions.

- (1610)

If passed, Bill C-50 would allow Canadians to learn when a political fundraiser has a ticket price or requires contributions above \$200, that it is happening, and who attended. The legislation would apply to all fundraising activities attended by cabinet ministers, including the Prime Minister, party leaders, and leadership contestants who meet these criteria.

This provision also applies to appreciation events for donors to a political party or contestant. This legislation would apply only to parties with a seat in the House of Commons. It would require parties to advertise fundraising events at least five days in advance. Canadians would know about a political fundraiser before the event takes place, which would give them the opportunity to inquire about a ticket if they so choose.

Bill C-50 would also give journalists the ability to determine when and where fundraisers are happening. At the same time, political parties would retain the flexibility to set their own rules for providing media access and accreditation. Parties would be required to report the names and partial addresses of attendees to Elections Canada within 30 days of the event. That information would then become public in a much more timely fashion than currently is the case.

The bill would also introduce new offences under the Canada Elections Act for those who do not respect the rules and require the return of any money collected at the event. These sanctions would apply to political parties and event organizers rather than the senior political leaders invited to the events.

We propose a maximum \$1,000 fine on summary conviction for offences introduced under Bill C-50. Of course, this is in addition to returning the funds raised. This new level of transparency would further enhance Canadians' trust in government, and that is good for everyone.

*Government Orders*

If passed, Bill C-50 would deliver on the government's promise to bring greater transparency to Canada's political financing system and thus strengthen our democratic institutions. As I have said, this is just one of the efforts that we are putting into place. The government is also taking action to increase voter participation and enhance the integrity of elections through Bill C-33, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, and the government has partnered with the Communications Security Establishment to protect democracy from cyber-threats.

While we know that Canadians have confidence in our democracy, we recognize that there is always room for improvement. Shining a light on political fundraising activities as and when they happen builds upon our already strong and robust system for political financing in Canada. It should be welcomed by everyone in the House.

**Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that what I am going to say does not sound a bit tongue in cheek or cheeky, but social work interns come in and they are able to do a practicum in my office because I was a social worker before I became a parliamentarian. Part of the conversation I have with those students is the difference between Parliament and government. Often community members sort of confuse the two, such as what a minister is, they are in government, and a member of Parliament is in Parliament.

I am having a hard time with the opposite side's response to the bill in blurring the lines between what we are talking about and that is talking about cash for access for government ministers. That is a whole different conversation from talking about political financing of party leaders and candidates having fundraisers. I feel that government ministers should not be involved in political financing. People should not be allowed to pay a certain amount of money to have access to a government minister. I want to hear the member's comments about the distinction between those roles.

• (1615)

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Mr. Speaker, obviously there are roles that relate to conflict of interest and ethics, and those are dealt with under that act. The changes we are talking about today are ones that relate to changes to political financing. The member's question is one that certainly should come up in any review of the conflict of interest and ethics considerations.

With respect to how these changes will help Canadians by providing them more transparency, maybe I could just walk through the process. Under the current rules, if someone donates \$200 to a political party, that amount, the information, and the names are already going to be collected. They will ultimately be disclosed to Elections Canada, and then published at some point in time six to nine months after the end of the fiscal year. It makes it difficult then for Canadians to know at the time whether or not people are attending these events, who those people might be, and to make their own determination as to whether anything improper has occurred or could be occurring.

The changes we are putting in now require that when these fundraisers take place, this information will be made available to the media in advance. The media will know where and when the events are taking place so they can attend, if they are accredited, and they can report at the event. Then of course the information will be

compiled and provided to Elections Canada within 30 days of the event so Canadians can see who attended.

It will be up to Canadians then, in addition to any other ethics considerations that might fall under a separate regime, to make up their own minds on whether they feel it is appropriate and if they continue to have faith and trust in the system. I believe they will because they will have the information at their fingertips, and the light of transparency will render it clean.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why the member is not the government minister for Newfoundland and Labrador. I think he would make a great minister representing his province.

Under the legislation, money gained through an illegal fundraiser has to be paid back. Along a similar vein, if a trip is taken to an island and the Ethics Commissioner finds it to be illegal, should that \$215,000 also be paid back to the taxpayers?

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Mr. Speaker, I will start with the member's comment. The Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence is a fantastic hard-working individual, and he has certainly earned his place to sit in cabinet. He represents Newfoundland and Labrador very well.

With respect to the question as to costs assumed and controlled by a separate level of government that determines the Prime Minister's safety, we all want a prime minister, regardless of what party he or she is in, to be safe and protected, and to have those safety and security considerations managed by the RCMP, which they do. The Prime Minister has followed the rules set out. He has apologized, and he suffers the consequences in public life of having made a mistake.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for St. John's East, for his speech. I have served on committee with him and he is a fine chap who should be the senior minister from Newfoundland.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-50 on political financing, also known as "we got caught with our hands in the cookie jar, but let us pretend that we have changed and not worry about it". However, that is just the working title of the bill.

The Liberals seem to enjoy making a mockery of their responsibility to this place by pretending to abide by and respect this institution, while acting to undermine our democracy and ethical standards. They claim to be transparent, but then introduce laws that lessen transparency. They claim to go above the spirit of the law, but refuse to follow the letter of the law. When caught, they make excuses, blame others, and accuse critics of mudslinging.

The Prime Minister wrote and signed the mandate letters. I have referred to them often in speeches and I feel like I am plagiarizing my old speeches by repeating what the Prime Minister stated, but it is important to set the stage for how this cynical bill came about. If the Liberals want to raise money, they could copyright that handbook and charge us every time we refer to it in the House to point out how they are breaking their own promises. It would probably surpass the Conservatives in fundraising.

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

The mandate letters specifically and repeatedly reference the Prime Minister's much-touted “Open and Accountable Government” document, so I will refresh members in the House on exactly what it says. It states, “A public office holder should not participate in a political activity that is, or that may reasonably be seen, to be incompatible with the public office holder's duties, or reasonably seen to impair his or her ability to discharge his or her public duties in a politically impartial fashion, or would cast doubt on the integrity or impartiality of the office.” The document is clear. In order to act ethically, one must choose to act ethically. There is no law that can prevent any instance of corruption from happening. It comes from behaviour and the tone set by the leader.

Let us see what the Liberals did to honour this pledge. We have the justice minister's exclusive Liberal fundraiser with Bay Street lawyers at over \$500 a head. The Liberals tried to excuse this by saying that the minister was not appearing as a justice minister, but rather, just a simple MP from Vancouver. Why a bunch of Bay Street lawyers would want to shell out \$500 a head to meet with just a simple MP from Vancouver is beyond me. We all know why the minister was there, and the Liberals know. They just do not care. Their excuse reminds me of the quote by the previous Prime Minister Trudeau about MPs being nobodies 50 yards off the Hill. I am surprised so many Bay Street lawyers would pay \$500 for a nobody.

Do not forget about the former immigration minister doing his duty as minister of the crown by attending a Liberal fundraiser at a private residence in Ontario at \$400 a ticket. Never fear, the former minister was roundly punished for this completely unethical sale of access to the highest confines of cabinet with a lowly ambassadorship to China. Thank Heaven the Liberal recourse mechanisms for breaking trust, ethics, and crossing boundaries are so severe.

Of course, we have the finance minister, who spent the entire fall dodging and ducking questions about his own lack of ethics. We should have seen this coming. Less than a year after being appointed to be the finance minister, he paid homage to the Liberal Party by selling access to himself for a whopping \$1,500 a ticket to an elite group of Halifax business people. Someone across the way can correct me if I am wrong, but I think one of those attendees was later rewarded with a plum patronage appointment. However, it might have been a different one. There have been so many that we cannot keep track.

The law-abiding, rule-following, precedent-setting Prime Minister, to whom all ministers look for ethical guidance, attended a fundraiser with wealthy Chinese billionaires. One was a Chinese businessman linked to the Communist Party in China, who donated over \$1 million to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. He just happened to be lobbying the Liberal government at the time for a banking licence, and guess what, he got the licence. Here we have it: donate to the Liberals or the Prime Minister's dad's foundation, lobby, and one gets a bank. That is a great deal.

### *Government Orders*

My favourite of all of the cash for access fundraisers is the famous hash for access. The Prime Minister's point person on legalizing recreational pot was the prize guest at a Liberal fundraising party attended by a marijuana lobbying group at a Toronto law office that advises clients in the cannabis business.

• (1620)

Remember the Prime Minister's orders: avoid the appearance of preferential access. However, the person leading the pot charge for the Liberal government was the head draw at a fundraiser at the law firm advising on the pot business, and it was attended by the Cannabis Friendly Business Association, CFBA, which represents dispensary owners and cannabis farmers who want the government to allow storefront pot shops. To avoid the appearance of preferential access, we have pot sellers donating to the Liberal Party and getting face time with the parliamentary secretary in charge of rolling out the pot laws.

In an article in *The Globe and Mail*, here is the Liberal's response:

The individuals associated with the organization you reference appear to have only registered with the lobbying commissioner on or after the date of the event itself, and therefore the party would not have been aware in advance of their activities.

Therefore, the Liberals did not do anything bad. However, in the same article, here is what a pot lobbyist said:

CFBA organizers Abi Roach and Jon Liedtke, a co-owner of the Higher Limits Cannabis Lounge in Windsor, Ont., lobbied and were photographed with [the parliamentary secretary], a former Toronto police chief, at the \$150-per-person fundraiser.

“I got 10 minutes of his time...It was worth it....”

Ms. Roach told *The Globe and Mail* that she:

“gets e-mails all the time” from the Liberals asking her to come to fundraisers, and no one vetted her for the April 28 event.

“They took our money happily without question,” Ms. Roach said. “If it was easier for people to speak to politicians, to explain their points of views without having to pay—I mean, there was no way to sit at this event, I was on my feet for four hours—I would rather to speak to a politician one-on-one in an office than have to pay.”

Here is a lobbyist saying that if only there was a way she could talk to the Liberal ministers without having to donate to the Liberal Party she would do it. Heavens.

The Liberals further allowed registered lobbyists into fundraisers in Montreal and Vancouver. They blamed this on a clerical error. Perhaps the same person making this clerical error forgot to note the finance minister's massive villa in France as a clerical error.

*Government Orders*

Who else is to blame for this? The Prime Minister in his year-end interview with *CTV News* said that all laws were followed and that it was the media and opposition causing concerns. Therefore, they break all ethical standards, accept money from registered lobbyists, but it is the media and the opposition's fault.

This brings me back to Bill C-50. On the heels of the cash for access fundraising scandal, the Liberals promised to make political fundraising more transparent. They came up with a bill that tried to legitimize unethical behaviour. When she introduced the bill, the minister stated, "Our government told Canadians we would set a higher bar on the transparency, accountability, and integrity".

I read the speech a few times. When I first glanced at it, I thought it was satire, but no, the minister was serious. The only reason Bill C-50 includes provisions on political financing is that the Liberals were plainly unable to keep their hands clean. In fact, they did over 100 cash for access fundraisers in 2016.

The *National Post* says, quoting *The Globe and Mail*, that:

A set of emails...show just how blatantly the party sells the opportunities offered by events featuring [the Prime Minister]. A gathering held at the home of a veteran [Liberal] fundraiser was promoted as a chance to "form relationships and open dialogues with our government."

When one puts a price on attendance, one is, by definition, selling. When one sets the incentive as being the opportunity to hobnob with the Liberal powerful elite, one is, by definition, selling access. The Liberals promised to act above and beyond the spirit of the law, as is their responsibility as leaders of the country. However, last fall's session demonstrated that the Liberals are not even capable of following the letter of the law.

This is a cynical bill merely set up because the government got caught, and more, on ethical behaviour. What is the easiest solution to avoid the implication that one is selling access? Just do not sell access to ministers. The Liberals could just not hold fundraisers with tickets sold to the highest bidders so that they can interact with the Prime Minister or a minister. It is much like not breaking the ethics laws to go to a billionaire's island. We do not need a law to prevent the Prime Minister from breaking the law. Just do not break the law. There is no rule change required to do this. All the Liberals need to do is change their behaviour.

• (1625)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in listening to the member across the way, I could not help but think that there is a very important aspect to this legislation, which is one of the reasons why it is necessary. On this side of the House, we recognize that there is also value in more transparency, even from opposition leaders. I know that there is a great deal of resistance to that, so we are broadening out that transparency and taking a more proactive approach to ensuring that individuals are aware of who is participating in these events. As a whole, I think Canadians would support this legislation as a positive thing.

What I do not understand is this. Are the Conservatives opposing this legislation because they are going to be holding their own leader accountable for the fundraising events that he could be conducting in the future? We all know that leaders of political parties are major attractions when it comes to local fundraising in our communities,

and it does not matter where they go. A leader of the official opposition, for example, has an incredible amount of authority, influence, and so forth.

Why would the Conservative Party not want to have the same sort of transparency for a leader of an official opposition as a minister of democratic reform or a minister of status of women or anything of that nature?

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is obvious. A leader of the opposition cannot sell access to Chinese billionaires and give them bank licences. People on this side of the House cannot allow certain companies preferential access for marijuana licences like a minister or a prime minister. It is simple. One cannot sell access to power like the Liberals have been doing. This bill does not prevent people from paying for access to the Liberal Prime Minister or ministers, all it does is try to legitimize a very unethical standard. If the Prime Minister does not want to be challenged on these ethics, he should not break the law, he should not sell access to Chinese billionaires, and he should not sell access to pot providers. It is simple.

• (1630)

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment my colleague from Edmonton West for his perfect recitation of the Liberal malfesance. I was proud to be part of the previous government, which fixed Liberal campaign financing laws. We made sure that only personal cheques could be issued. We put an upper limit on it, as well as not allowing corporate or union donations. It was a very robust system of checks and balances.

I am proud of the recent fundraising efforts of the Conservative Party of Canada. We blew away the opposition due to the efforts of our party and our volunteers. Again, our message is certainly getting through and people are responding.

My friend from Edmonton West gave a terrific recitation of all the things, the cash for access, the Prime Minister's visit to a billionaire's island, and so on and so forth. I would like to ask him a simple question. What is it about the Liberals that causes them to behave this way?

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, there is a quote out there that one does not have to worry; Liberals will eventually go back to being Liberals. We saw it instantly when immediately after being elected they were selling access. Liberals are Liberals. It is like the old Aesop's fable about the scorpion riding on the frog. Halfway across the river the scorpion stings the frog. The frog says, "We're both going to drown", and the scorpion says, "I'm sorry, it's in my nature." It is in the Liberals' nature.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my friend also mentioned the increase in donations to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation and how they spiked once the member for Papineau was named the leader of the Liberal Party in 2013. Then they went even higher as that member became Prime Minister. Maybe my friend can expand on that a little.

**Mr. Kelly McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, it is part of this ongoing issue of ethics that we see with the Liberal government. We see massive donations from people to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and they are getting extra favours. One gentleman got granted a bank licence. We also see that the Liberal government gives money to the Liberal-friendly Canada 2020 group, which in turn promotes Liberal policies.

The current government is known for giving preferential access to Liberal donors. We see it again and again. It does not matter whether it is Canada 2020 or the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. The government needs to pull up its fancy socks on the ethics issue.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act with respect to political financing.

Last spring, the Liberal government tabled a bill that would require political parties with seats in the House of Commons to publicize in advance fundraising events with a ticket price above \$200 involving party leaders, ministers, or leadership contestants, and submit a report to Elections Canada afterward with details of who organized and attended the event, as well as the total amount of contributions made to attend that event.

The bill would impose a modest, perhaps too strong a word, trivial penalty of up to \$1,000 on every person who fails to publish information about a fundraiser in a prominent location online five days in advance of the event, to file a report within 30 days following the event, or to provide certain information in that report. The bill would not apply to parliamentary secretaries and ministerial staff, including chiefs of staff and senior staffers, and staff at the Prime Minister's Office.

The Minister of Democratic Institutions tabled Bill C-50 last spring, following months of public outrage over the Liberal Party's cash for access fundraisers featuring key ministers. My friend, the member for Edmonton West, touched on a few of those circumstances in his speech.

The Liberal government has billed the proposed legislation as something that would increase openness and transparency in political fundraising. The pretence of the bill's authors, that Bill C-50 would do anything to change the policy of cash for access fundraisers by the government, is, quite frankly, ludicrous. That it in some way limits influence on ministers or the prime minister is kind of tenuous at best.

That is the issue. Bill C-50 appears, on the surface, like an important piece of legislation, meant to provide clarity and assure the public that nothing nefarious is going on here in Ottawa; that foreign billionaires are not greasing the wheel to get access to our housing market, or buying up our tech companies, and potentially putting our national security at risk. However, in fact, the government and its

Prime Minister are simply attempting to gain credit for solving a problem they created. Bill C-50 is nothing more than an attempt to legitimize the act of pay-to-play through legislation.

It was not long ago that the Prime Minister stood on a stage during the last campaign, and told Canadians that the Liberals were going to do things differently. They were going to be more open and transparent. After the election, the Prime Minister gave mandate letters to his ministers, where he said, unequivocally, that there should be no undue influence, no perception, real or otherwise, of any political interference, and that he expected his ministers to be held to a high standard when it comes to political interference and influence.

It was not long after that that the media started publicizing cash for access fundraisers involving high profile ministers and the Prime Minister himself. Lawyers were paying to see the Minister of Justice, and foreign billionaires were hobnobbing with the Prime Minister. These are just two of the examples. Many followed in the weeks after the stories broke in the media. It was quite the spectacle, and a sad state of affairs for the government. People who attended these fundraisers were more than happy to tell the media about who they talked to and on what they had lobbied.

Worse, the *National Post* reported that gifts to the Trudeau foundation had increased significantly since the member for Papineau's April 2013 election as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. The *National Post* alleged that the \$2 million surplus maintained at that foundation is through large foreign donations and sponsorships with businesses that are actively lobbying the federal government. It should also be noted that since April 2013, donations went from \$172,000 to \$731,000 in 2016. Here is where it gets interesting. Foreign donations went from zero in 2007 to over a \$500,000 in 2016. One cannot blame Canadians for their cynicism of Ottawa.

My colleague, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, who sits on the procedure and House affairs committee, from where Bill C-50 recently returned, said that the problem was that these events were happening, not that they were not being reported. He went on to say that now we have a report, and that is nice, but that is not the issue.

The member is correct. Bill C-50 does not stop cash for access, it simply legitimizes it.

The committee heard from a number of witnesses who felt Bill C-50 was a nice idea, but it lacked teeth. Ms. Dawson, the then Ethics Commissioner, indicated that the bill should be amended to include parliamentary secretaries, which the bill does not.

● (1635)

Canada's former Chief Electoral Officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, was surprised to see a penalty as low as \$1,000. He encouraged the fines to be increased to \$5,000, which the bill does not. Mr. Kingsley also made recommendations to capture key political staff in ministers' offices and the PMO, which the bill does not. The Liberals voted all of the amendments down, and ignored the recommendations of key witnesses. The truth is amendments to Bill C-50 missed the point.

*Government Orders*

If the Prime Minister were serious, he would simply ban the practice, not introduce a piece of legislation that amounts to nothing more than an accounting event, like a receipt that so many of us ignore after paying our groceries every week.

The Prime Minister was unequivocal when he said that no one should be given preferential access to government, or the appearance of preferential access, because they made financial contributions to political parties. Yet, this very day the Prime Minister is in Edmonton, where this evening he will attend a Liberal Party donor reception at the Fairmont.

Recently, the Lobbying Commissioner released a report indicating lobbying has risen significantly with the Liberal government. The blatant hypocrisy of the government knows no bounds.

Bill C-50 would not change the issue of fundraising in private residences and media access is still in question. Little would change with this piece of legislation, because cash for access would still exist.

This is not about Canadians donating a few hundred dollars to their political party of choice. What this is about is ensuring that Canadians are treated fairly, that one organization is not out-bidding another behind closed doors, that foreign entities are not influencing our government and democratic institutions, and putting our national security at risk, and that the very foundation of our nation, our fundamental freedoms, are not placed in peril.

Under Bill C-50, these cash for access fundraisers with ministers and the Prime Minister can still go on, albeit with a report, and even where nothing discreditable or immoral is taking place, the perception that something might or is will still haunt our political institutions. This simply must stop.

Canadians deserve a prime minister who does not say one thing and then do another. They deserve a government that does not have one set of rules for Canadians, and another for itself and its friends.

A new law will not make the Prime Minister's cash for access fundraisers ethical. If the Prime Minister wanted to end cash for access, all he had to do was just stop doing these fundraisers. He did not have to create this legislation using House time. It does not take legislation.

Bending the rules, so the Prime Minister can keep charging \$1,500 for wealthy individuals to meet him and discuss government business is simply wrong. The rules are very clear. Why does the Prime Minister not just follow the rules like everyone else? On this side of the House, we will continue to follow the law as we always have.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before continuing with questions and comments, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, the Environment.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Conservatives position themselves to be on the wrong side, and will ultimately be voting against this legislation by the sounds of it, I would like to quote the former Conflict of Interest Commissioner, someone who has been quoted extensively by the Conservatives over the past week or so. This is what Mary Dawson said about the legislation:

I support the direction of this proposed legislation. As I've said on previous occasions, transparency is important for any kind of regime that touches on conflict of interest.

This is good legislation. I am getting the impression that the real reason why the Conservatives do not like this legislation is because they do not believe that their own leader has any sense of obligation to be transparent on the fundraising that he does.

Is the reason why the Conservatives are opposed to this legislation because they do not believe the leader of the Conservative Party should have to share with Canadians with whom he is meeting?

Does the member believe that the leader of the official opposition has absolutely no authority, no ability to influence, that there is no need or reason for the leader of the official opposition to tell people who is lobbying him?

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, the reason we are in this particular situation at this point in time is because the Liberals continued to break the law. In order to fix the problem they created, they put in new legislation. Had they just used common sense and followed the rules, we would not be using House time to do this. We know there are many issues we could be debating right now if we were not just trying to solve Liberal problems.

These cash for access events, as I mentioned, make Canadians look badly upon Ottawa and politicians. They know that if they only pay enough money to the political party, the political leaders at the time, they will have access to government. Therefore, it is the well lawyered and lobbied as to who gets issues moved forward.

Meanwhile, we have to remember that the dollars given by any government to any other institution are ones taken from somebody or an organization, usually hard-working Canadians. If we do not respect that and see the elites getting that money, we have a problem. That is why Canadians need answers on this, and why they do not trust the members opposite.

• (1645)

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the foresight my colleague has in the things he brought forward. One of the things that has been mentioned is the direction from the Ethics Commissioner. It is problematic to me when somebody has to give somebody else direction when we should be able to direct ourselves. Our member was suggesting that if we are ethical and responsible people, we can direct ourselves. It is sad that we need to have an Ethics Commissioner giving us direction, because we cannot, or someone cannot, follow their own common sense and do the ethical thing.

Would the member like to expand on ethical behaviour and direction that we believe people should be able to do individually?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, my friend from Bow River is absolutely right. We are using House time to debate a problem that the Liberals created. They put this piece of legislation forward that really does not fix the problem. Had they just stopped what they are doing or used more common sense, we would not be in this problem.

Let us look at the Prime Minister's recent illegal vacation to billionaire island. Had he just used common sense, and realized what he was doing was wrong, we would not be in this position. We would not be asking the Prime Minister to pay back \$200,000 of taxpayer money for that illegal vacation.

I should also point out to my friend from Bow River that the then Ethics Commissioner also indicated that the bill should be amended to include parliamentary secretaries. It is important to note that provision is not in this bill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since I have heard nothing on this since the beginning of the debate, I would like to know the Conservatives' position on the issue of cash for access to ministers and to the Prime Minister, which often involves very large sums of money.

If the Conservatives really consider that as unacceptable as they say in their speeches, why were there no legislative changes during their 10 years in government? Can we expect them to clearly state that they are opposed to providing privileged access to ministers in return for money?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Mr. Speaker, I actually disagree with my friend from Sherbrooke. There were a number of provisions brought forward. We did that, and the examples are very clear. There are many of them. What we are discussing here now is the current Prime Minister, who seems to have one rule for himself and his friends, and another for Canadians. We need to bring everyone up to the same level. These actions by the Prime Minister make all of us look bad. Had he just used common sense, followed the rules, we would not be in this situation right now.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak officially to Bill C-50, which we have been discussing for a few hours already, clearly without reaching consensus. There is considerable resistance on this side of the House. While the bill contains some positive elements, it is very disappointing.

Indeed, today is a sad anniversary. One year ago, the Prime Minister announced that there would be no electoral reform, that the 2015 election would not be the last one under the current electoral system, and that the status quo would be maintained for the 2019 election.

During the last election, in 2015, the Liberals created much hope because the Prime Minister and his candidates in all ridings across Canada had solemnly promised electoral reform. They promised to change the voting system in Canada to make it similar to other countries, mostly advanced democracies, who have an electoral system with one form or another of proportional representation. The announcement last year was therefore a major disappointment. As I

said, people had trusted the Liberals and placed their faith in the Liberal Party.

In the end, the Prime Minister decided that this was not a good idea. He said that there was not enough of a consensus. However, over 80% of the witnesses who appeared before the parliamentary committee tasked with studying the issue supported a proportional voting system, or, at the very least, electoral reform. I think that there was a consensus. Furthermore, a large majority of the experts, if not all of them, supported a proportional voting system.

However, the Prime Minister said last year that there was no consensus, and that not enough people agreed on one type of electoral system to implement an electoral reform.

Today, the cat is out of the bag. One year after this announcement, he is starting to show his true colours on the question of electoral reform. Perhaps, he never believed in electoral reform, or never wanted to implement it. Perhaps, cynically speaking, today in 2018, he promised electoral reform just to get elected. Perhaps he never intended to proceed with electoral reform in Canada during his political career.

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister told CBC that he had no plans to move forward with electoral reform. He added something pretty revealing. He said that if people still want to talk about electoral reform or a system that would be good for Canadians, he is ready to talk about it, especially if they want to discuss a preferential system. That says a lot about the true intention behind his promise to Canadians to reform the electoral system.

That is the context surrounding Bill C-50. It is such a minor measure, a measure that does very little other than provide slightly more transparency, which I am sure nobody here would object to. The current electoral system has another big problem that this bill does not address. The problem was there when the Conservatives were in power. It was also there when the Liberals were in power before that. They all engaged in the same cash for access practices.

● (1650)

The problem is still there and has again come to light under the current Prime Minister's Liberal government. We have seen him go to private, affluent homes owned by people who have an interest in the affairs of the Government of Canada, people he hosted at these \$1,500 events. Some of them had interests in the infrastructure bank while others, such as the Chinese, wanted to buy Canadian telecommunication companies in B.C. Some also had interests in cannabis. We are well aware that those people have influence among the Liberals. They have infiltrated the Liberal Party and taken part in fundraisers to gain access to ministers. The Prime Minister himself attended these cash for access events. He cannot claim that it was just a mistake made by one of his cabinet colleagues who should not have done that. He himself actively participated in the Liberal scheme of selling access to ministers and decision makers at those events.

*Government Orders*

We know that the Minister of Justice was involved, but I do not want to repeat all the examples given by other members. Still, this is a glaring problem. Certain lawyers seeking judicial appointments to courts across Canada will pay substantial amounts to attend a private reception with the Minister of Justice in a city that is not even in her riding. It does not take an advanced degree in ethics to see that this is a problem. However, no member in the front row of the Liberal government is sounding the alarm. They take part in these events as if it there was nothing wrong.

Given the series of incidents that garnered a lot of media attention, it seemed reasonable to expect today that the Liberals would use Bill C-50 to solve the problem. We would have thought that maybe a cabinet member, perhaps the Minister of Democratic Institutions, would have woken up and told herself that it was time to take action. The government may have reviewed its internal practices, but it likely would have been better to change the law. The government should have acknowledged that privileged access to cabinet is not the right way to do politics in Canada, and then addressed the problem for this and future governments. Instead, with Bill C-50, the government is insinuating that this practice is acceptable and can continue as long as it is more transparent.

People in my home riding of Sherbrooke who have trouble contacting a public servant about the guaranteed income supplement, resolving EI issues with Service Canada, or reaching someone by phone at the Canada Revenue Agency will then see, because it will be transparent, rich investors pay \$1,500 to have privileged access not only to a minister, but to the Prime Minister, if they want. All this bill does is formalize or legalize this practice, at a time when our constituents are struggling to receive services from their government. Rich millionaires, for their part, will have a direct line, not to public servants, but to elected officials. The Liberals, however, seem to be saying that there is no problem.

Happily, there is still hope for the people of Sherbrooke, who find this type of privileged access shameful. There are parties in the House, including mine, that are proposing something different.

• (1655)

When my leader, Jagmeet Singh, promises electoral reform, he sincerely means it, unlike the Liberals who say things to get elected, and then do exactly the opposite once they are in power. Happily, there is hope, and I am certain that Canadians can trust our leader, Jagmeet Singh, and get results.

[English]

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comments and his dedication to this file.

At its heart, Bill C-50 is about ensuring that prime ministers, leadership candidates, ministers, and opposition leaders are accountable to Canadians when they attend fundraisers that cost over \$200 to attend. This is fundamentally about openness and transparency.

What we seem to have are two opposition parties whose leaders both attended high-value fundraisers. The leader of the official opposition originally denied that he had attended one and later admitted it, and the new leader of the NDP attended high-value

fundraisers during his leadership candidacy but is now refusing to follow the leader of the Liberal Party in openness and transparency.

I am at a loss. Perhaps the member could help me understand why it is that we have one party on this side of the House that has embraced this new era of openness and transparency, and we have two parties opposite that are fighting tooth and nail to prevent the passage of a bill that will create more openness and transparency.

• (1700)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether my colleague heard the last part of my speech, but the basic problem is that the bill does not solve the problem of cash for access. It just formalizes it and makes it even more official.

My colleague says that it will provide for greater accountability from members of cabinet who take part in these activities, but that is not true. They will simply be able to say that they only had private meetings with rich people. What does that change in the lives of ordinary Canadians? The bill just brings to light that privileged access exists in our democracy. It simply makes it more transparent. The people involved will not be more accountable.

I also do not know why the hon. member is trying to compare cabinet members, the executives, with members of Parliament and even with a leader who is not even a member of this House. I do not understand why he is trying to compare apples and oranges. That never ends very well.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly heard what the member was saying and wondered what his thoughts would be.

I have described this legislation a number of times as “I got caught with my hand in the cookie jar, so I will blame the cookie jar act”. Obviously, the Prime Minister and some of his cabinet ministers have not really followed the legislation that is in existence already, so this is kind of a PR stunt to make it look like something will change.

If the Prime Minister has not followed the laws that are already in place, does the member think that with this change the Prime Minister is going to follow this and it will make everything all right, or does he think the Prime Minister is going to carry on doing the kinds of unethical things he has done in the past?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:** Mr. Speaker, it actually matters little what legislation is in force, whether it is the Conflict of Interest Act or the Canada Elections Act. I am just afraid that the Prime Minister continues to think that the laws do not apply to him, that they are for others, and that he can do what he wants. Basically, if he contravenes the Conflict of Interest Act, he just pardons himself and acts as if nothing has happened.



*Government Orders*

Unfortunately, by being found guilty by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner for his trip to a private island, he has certainly broken Canadians' trust in our institutions and in the office of Prime Minister. He is supposed to be the first to comply with the laws of Canada. In this case, do not take my word for it; it was the Ethics Commissioner who found him guilty of four violations of the act.

How can we therefore trust a Prime Minister who, with his fellow ministers and Liberal members of Parliament, continues to enact new legislation while having no scruples about contravening it and giving himself a pardon right afterwards?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today and participate in this debate. I have listened intently this afternoon to my colleagues' remarks and they have outlined very well not only what is wrong with the legislation, but clearly what is wrong with the government.

The member for Banff—Airdrie referred to it as the Prime Minister getting caught with his hand in the cookie jar. That is a really good way of summing it up, but I can envision a cartoon where the Prime Minister has his hand in the cookie jar and over his shoulder there are about 20 or 30 other hands reaching into the cookie jar and those hands belong to cabinet ministers.

It all started with the justice minister who, as one of my colleagues referred to earlier, somehow tried to slough off this cash for access fundraiser that she held in Vancouver as just a meeting of friends. Well, all of these friends happened to be lawyers, all meeting with the justice minister, all writing big cheques in the hope that someday one or more of them would be promoted to the bench. They know that the justice minister is the one who makes those decisions. They write a cheque, hobnob a bit at a private fundraiser and that is what happens.

We had the government being caught on more than one occasion with this cash for access. It is hard to imagine that we have only been in this place for just over two years and when we look at all of the ethics breaches the government has managed to come forward with, if we wanted to script this, it would be very difficult. The former health minister decided she needed her own limos. Another minister continues to use limos to go back and forth between here and the minister's home in Quebec. The Prime Minister travelled to a private island.

The Conservatives actually travelled to an island a week ago, but we went to Vancouver Island to work. We did not go to a private island owned by the Aga Khan to play on the beach and then bill taxpayers for that trip. By the way, he also took along the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and there might have been a backbencher who went with them as well. There was a whole bunch of them who decided it was all right to go to a private island and bill the taxpayers for it. These are the kinds of ethics issues we raise day after day in the House and we hear lots of chuckles from the government side. The Liberals think it is a big joke. They call it open and transparent. I call it unethical behaviour.

It took the Prime Minister just over a year to break the rules. What did the Liberals do? They bring in legislation under the namesake of open and transparent legislation. They were not going to do this

again. They were not going to get caught with their hands in the cookie jar. They are actually going to tell people when they are sticking their hands in the cookie jar and somehow that makes it okay.

It is important to note that despite the Liberals having their hands in the cookie jar, the Conservatives continued to raise more money than the Liberals. The numbers are out now and 2017 was a banner year for the Conservatives. Canadians felt that they needed to make a contribution to a party that was prepared to hold the government to account. Some \$18 million was raised by the Conservatives in the last year and \$14 million was raised by the Liberals. By the way, the party in government should be able to raise twice as much money as the opposition because the governing party is the one that makes the decisions.

● (1705)

It is human nature for people to write cheques to the government party so they can feel like they have some influence on those decisions, but they were a failure. The government is not only a failure at governing, it is a failure at raising money but it has to do it unethically so it brings in this legislation. The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader stood up a few minutes ago and quoted the outgoing Ethics Commissioner as saying that this legislation is headed in the right direction.

I thought about that for a minute, and I remembered that a short time ago, I was in a strange city and I was not sure where I was. I stopped at a gas station and asked if I was headed in the right direction. The guy said that yes, I was headed in the right direction, and so I said, "Okay, I just keep going down that road." He then said, "No, if you go down that road, it ends and actually falls off a cliff." He said that I had to turn left and then turn right. I sort of caution the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader that headed in the right direction does not mean it is the answer to solving the unethical behaviour of the current government.

I have heard this just about every time the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions stands up and talks. I know that these are all the Liberal talking points about openness, transparency, and all of these types of things, but quite frankly, this legislation is none of the above. It pretends that it is open. It pretends that somehow what the cabinet ministers are doing is open and transparent and it meets all of what Canadians believe an ethical government would be doing, an ethical party would be doing, but it does not.

As an example, as has been mentioned many times today, parliamentary secretaries such as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, are not covered by this particular legislation. He can go out and have private fundraisers, use his position as a parliamentary secretary, and that is all just fine. He does not have to abide by the legislation, but that is okay because this particular party, this particular government does not abide by most legislation or legal rules anyway.

*Government Orders*

The Prime Minister took a trip to a private island. When he came back, he tried to hide it. Then it was discovered that yes, he did in fact take the trip with his buddy the veterans affairs minister and a couple of others, and billed the taxpayers to the tune of about \$200,000. Not only does he refuse to pay that money back, but he refuses to stand up and answer questions in this House. He sloughs it off to his House leader to answer the questions for him. That is absolutely despicable.

We know this legislation is going to pass, and we know that it is better than what the government could have brought forward. Quite frankly, I thought the government would be bringing back the per vote subsidy, because we have seen the Liberals cannot raise money to the tune that the Conservatives can raise money with Canadians. I thought they would be bringing back the per vote subsidy because, like the New Democrats, that is what the Liberals think is the right way to have Canadians fund political parties. I am proud to say that when the Conservative Party was in government, it changed all of that, and our legislation today for how we raise money is among the best in the world.

However, we do not need legislation to prevent bad behaviour and that is what we have had by the Liberal government. We have had bad ethical behaviour, so what has happened is the Liberals have brought in this particular legislation to try to cover up their bad behaviour and now they want Canadians to say that they have solved all the problems. It has been made very clear by our members who have spoken to this particular bill that we are not going to fall for this. Canadians will not fall for it either, and the Liberals will end up paying the price in the next election. They are already paying the price because Canadians are no longer delivering the money to their party. The Liberals will pay the price in 2019.

• (1710)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member, along with his colleagues across the way, have a new-found esteem for the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and have been very interested lately in what she had to say about a number of topics. I wonder if the member would tell me how he feels about what she said about Bill C-50, which is:

I support the direction of this proposed legislation.... The amendments to the Canada Elections Act proposed by Bill C-50 promote transparency with respect to fundraising activities. I think it is a positive measure.... It goes quite a good way, I think, because it puts things in the public domain. It allows me to have access to some information if I'm dealing with some kind of a problem.

Does the member agree with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner?

• (1715)

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member was listening to my speech, but I absolutely addressed that, because it was raised by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. Heading in the right direction hardly means that it is going to solve the problem. If a person is driving in a strange city and stops to ask someone if he or she is headed in the right direction, the answer may be, "Yes, but you had better take a left or right turn because you will drive off the edge of a cliff if you stay headed in that direction."

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is probably not much of a surprise to anyone

in this chamber that I agree with many of the sentiments of my colleague from Alberta, particularly that this is more about political cover for mistakes made by the Prime Minister and many of his ministers, including the Minister of Justice, who hails from British Columbia.

There have been useful changes in the system, done by both Conservative and Liberal governments past. Getting rid of big money by banning union and corporate donations certainly changed the way that we campaign in this country, and I think for the better. It is something that the previous Chrétien government brought into play and which the Conservatives, in the last several Parliaments, continued to tighten up.

In this regard, would the member give us a specific example of why this is more political covering for the Liberals' lack of integrity, similar to what we saw with their proposed open, transparent, and accountable government pledges, only to have them vacationing and breaking the ethics laws?

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the sunny Okanagan is exactly correct. We will give full credit to the former Liberal government and former Prime Minister Chrétien who brought in significant changes, changes which, frankly, I think everyone endorsed and certainly endorses today. One cannot be seen to be bought by big corporations or unions and it was brought in because that was a perception that many Canadians had.

This is totally different. This is cover-up legislation. This is trying to cover up bad ethical behaviour. As my colleague mentioned, it started in Vancouver literally months after the Liberal government was elected, with the Minister of Justice hauling in a bunch of lawyers to write big cheques and expect to get promoted to the bench. Then it went from there, and we all know about the Prime Minister's little trip to an island last Christmas and he is still refusing to pay that money back.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question relates to something I previously asked. I am surprised that the Conservative Party does not recognize the value of having legislation that is more transparent when it comes to political fundraising, specifically in the area of leaders, not just ministers, but leaders. I am going to ask the member the same question I have asked other members.

Does the Conservative Party really believe that it is fooling Canadians by voting against this legislation, trying to give the impression that there is no need to hold the leader of the official opposition or other opposition party leaders accountable for where they are getting their money from? It was not that long ago when the leader of the official opposition was not telling people when he had fundraisers and who was contributing to his campaign. Why are the Conservatives opposing that?

**Mr. Ron Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, our leader has not been found guilty of conflict of interest. Our shadow minister of finance has not been found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner for forgetting to report his rental apartment in Ottawa.

*Government Orders*

There is a big difference between our members and how they conduct themselves and how this Prime Minister and these ministers have been conducting themselves over the past two years.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be taking part in this evening's debate on Bill C-50, which I consider a highly superficial solution to a problem the Liberal Party itself created.

In 2016, from the summer through to the end of the year, the Liberal Party of Canada organized a number of \$1,500-a-ticket fundraisers. They were held across Canada, in major centres and in the regions, and were attended by 30, 40, 50 or 60 guests at a time. People had to organize the fundraisers to provide special access to the Prime Minister and various ministers. No doubt the orders came from the Liberal Party itself, putting the Prime Minister and a number of Liberal ministers in the awkward position of probably having to make a few speeches, drink some good wine, and eat some little crackers. That is all well and good. Unfortunately, there were some less than pleasant discussions about the whole situation, discussions involving ministers and the Prime Minister about a problem the Liberals created.

During the election campaign, the Liberals peddled hope. They said they would put all kinds of money into infrastructure, but they were very evasive about how it would be done and where the money would go. People wanted to know how to get some of that money. As a result, in order to boost their own party funding, the Liberals created a monster during the election campaign that caused some ethical problems. How sad.

Canadians can donate to political parties. We, on this side of the House, look for values and direction. We give Canadians the option of donating money to the Conservative Party or to Conservative Party associations, because we want to provide all Canadians with vital leadership that is fair and equitable.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Party gets its funding based on the private interests of organizations and companies that want preferential treatment or information on how to get what they want, such as access to programs or appointments. We have seen that in the past, and I have no doubt we will see it again in the future.

Sooner or later, this whole thing will become a scandal and really blow up. The scandal will undermine Canadians' confidence in our democracy, all because of the old Liberal ways when it comes to party financing.

I can confirm that the more time goes by, the more opportunities we will have to ask the new Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to enforce and monitor the directives established in the document entitled "Open and Accountable Government", provided by the Prime Minister himself, who made some changes here in the House.

This evening I have the opportunity to talk about values and ethics and to reiterate our concerns on this side of the House for the new Liberal MPs who are being immersed in the old Liberal Party culture by the old guard, perhaps, or the upper echelons of the party.

Ethics are clearly a value lacking from this Liberal government's judgment. I believe that the Liberals like to get dangerously close to the borderline and step on either side. They always push the boundaries of conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest.

Under the Conflict of Interest Act, we must not put ourselves in conflict of interest or in apparent conflict of interest. It is truly unacceptable in our democracy.

• (1720)

The goal of this evening's debate is specifically to ensure that no preferential access or appearance of preferential access in exchange for donations is granted to individuals or organizations that may have contributed to the Liberal Party through its fundraising activities. That is why I stated that in the last six months of 2016, the Liberal Party organized a series of \$1,500-a-ticket events for 25, 30, 40 or 50 people, raking in \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$70,000 per evening.

I want to confirm that, since the Liberals came to power, scandals involving the Liberals' dubious fundraising activities have continued to emerge. There are always new events that outrage honest citizens, hence this evening's debate on a government initiative to put in place superficial measures related to its own conduct.

It is very shocking, because not all Canadians can afford to pay \$1,500 for privileged access to a minister or the Prime Minister. Ethical lapses continue to pile up. It began when the Prime Minister's friends moved to Ottawa from Toronto or other cities, claiming \$200,000 in moving expenses. Personally, when I move, I pay for it myself, and that is also the case for Canadians.

• (1725)

I would like to go back to a story we hear a lot about these days. I had the opportunity to ask several questions about the famous trip taken by the Prime Minister to the Aga Khan's private island. The Prime Minister apologized for that mistake, but he said it had to do with the trip itself, which ended in January 2017. It is hard to imagine that the Prime Minister did not plan the trip with his family and that it was just a mistake. Come on. During her 11-month investigation, the previous conflict of interest and ethics commissioner learned that the trip first started being planned in the summer of 2016. People in the Prime Minister's Office, the RCMP, and the Prime Minister's family, among others, already knew that he would be visiting the Aga Khan's island. This therefore is not a simple mistake. The trip was planned, and they had the opportunity, right from the start, to ask the commissioner if precautions should be taken to avoid any conflict of interest. Unfortunately, we learned from the report that no such inquiry was submitted to the commissioner.

In addition, the Prime Minister's family so thoroughly enjoyed the trip to the Aga Khan's island, which cost Canadian taxpayers more than \$200,000, that they were ready to go back there two months later, after being invited again. The family then packed up their bags and flew once more to the island, again at taxpayers' expense.

*Private Members' Business*

Canadians were not fooled and they are shocked. They like travelling, but they pay for their trips out of their own pockets when they choose to travel to such sunny destinations. The Prime Minister, however, chooses not to pay and to just apologize. When something is stolen, apologies are not enough. One must be accountable to society. All this leads us to believe that this bill is just a cosmetic exercise for a problem created by the Liberals. In my view, the old Liberal culture will keep rearing its ugly head, and we will be pleased to denounce it.

• (1730)

[*English*]

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have never owned a mule, and I have never had the opportunity to ride on a mule, but I imagine that if I had a favourite old mule, I would want to ride it as far and as long as I possibly could. Looking at things that way, I can understand why members of the official opposition party are riding this particular mule as far as they have, the mule of pretending to oppose this bill for any reason other than the true reason, which is that they do not want to have transparency in their fundraising regime.

Will the member opposite admit that this mule is tired, unsaddle it, and tell us all that the real reason for the opposition is to avoid full transparency in fundraising, such as modelled by this side of the House?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House see no problem with the political financing system. The laws in place are already very good. The Liberals created the problem, and now they are looking for a way out. Unfortunately for them, that is not going to happen. This is what happens when political financing is used to get favours, and we have to try to make the best of it.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière will have 3 minutes and 45 seconds remaining when this matter comes before the House again.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY

The House resumed from November 22, 2017, consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 133, which seeks to declare September 28 of every year British home child day in Canada.

This motion seeks to recognize the significant contributions that the British home children made to Canada, especially their service to our armed forces throughout the 20th century.

The motion also seeks to recognize the hardships and stigmas that many of the British home children endured, as well as the importance of educating and reflecting upon their story for future generations.

I fully support this motion, and I urge my parliamentary colleagues to do the same. We should all be proud to recognize the contributions made by these people, who came to Canada as children and helped build our country.

It is estimated that 12% of Canadians have ancestors who were British home children. That is approximately 4 million people, an incredible number. In other words, one Canadian in nine. The thinking that led to the decision to uproot those children from their lives in England and send them to another country, thousands of kilometres away, seems absurd to us today. The children had no idea what awaited them. The story of their lives in Canada is happy for some and sad for others. Moreover, the background of a large number of them will forever remain unknown. Many were initially ashamed and, once they were adults, they decided to forget. They have never told their families how things went after they arrived in Canada.

Others know nothing about their families and heritage because, in some cases, the charitable organizations that brought them to Canada changed their names. They were so young when it happened, and they no longer remember their birth names or who their biological parents were. David and Kay Lorente from Renfrew, Ontario, were among the first to stand up for the rights of home children and their family members. They founded Home Children Canada, which has helped many families gain access to personal files and has raised awareness in Canada about British home children.

David's father was a home child who, by all accounts, had a difficult time at the first farm where he was placed, but who was treated well at the second.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention the efforts that Perry Snow, John Willoughby, and Lori Oschefski have made to ensure that this important part of Canadian history is never forgotten.

The children who arrived in Canada came from all over the United Kingdom. Some of them were orphans. However, many of them had families and, for various poverty-related reasons, were placed in institutions, likely workhouses, correctional facilities, or homes run by charitable organizations.

At the time, governments on both sides of the Atlantic considered immigration of that kind to be a good idea. In the 1860s, England went through an economic depression and sending children to Canada allowed the government to divest itself of the costs of meeting their needs.

Correspondingly, Canada was expanding and farms all across the country were desperately seeking labour. Initially, the children's travel expenses were greatly subsidized in Canada. Nova Scotia provided \$5 for young children and \$10 for older ones. Ontario provided \$6 and the federal government provided \$2 for every child that the charitable organizations brought into the country.

Once the children arrived in Canada, the charitable organizations reached apprenticeship agreements in order to stabilize the working conditions of children of various ages. For the young children, the organizations gave about \$5 per month in compensation to the family caring for them, whereas older children were expected to work for a living.

Most organizations required children over the age of 14 to be paid a salary for the work that they did. However, many children never received that salary and, for the majority of them, their lives were defined by the work they could do rather than by what they needed.

In fact, the apprenticeship agreements are brutal reminders that the children were not considered to be family members, but servants. What situation did the children find themselves in? It is impossible to know for sure. There is very little data available. However, by collecting letters, archives, and evidence from various inquiries held in the United Kingdom and Australia, a reasonable picture can be painted, a picture of a very difficult life that, for some, brought much suffering.

● (1735)

We need to recognize the pain associated with the loss of their identity, as well as the fact that some of the children were abused. This event is part of Canada's history, and we must recognize its existence today. However, many Canadians are unaware of this chapter of our country's history. I myself did not know about this story.

By declaring September 28 British Home Child Day, we send a powerful message about the importance of the personal and collective experience these children went through and the role they played in building our country.

Not only did they help build this country, they also fought to keep it free. An estimated 10,000 British home children fought for Canada in World War I. Many also fought in World War II alongside the descendants of children who came to Canada at the beginning of the immigration program.

The government has supported several awareness, commemoration, and education initiatives to highlight the many hardships British home children experienced and their contribution to Canada.

The partnership between Library and Archives Canada and the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa is one of the most important initiatives. Thanks to this partnership, extensive records held by Library and Archives Canada on the British home children have been publicly released, and most of them are also available online. These records include passenger lists, immigration branch correspondence files, inspection reports, non-government collections, and indexes to some records held in the United Kingdom.

I am certain that my colleagues will vote in favour of this motion and that the British home children will get the recognition they deserve.

Once this motion is adopted, Canadians will want to learn more about this unique event in our shared history and the contributions that British home children and their descendants have made to our

country. Once again, I hope my colleagues in the House will vote yes on this motion.

[English]

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an extreme pleasure to stand tonight to speak to the motion from my colleague, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, to establish a day to recognize British home children. In fact, this story is unknown to most in Canada.

As has been mentioned by my colleague across the aisle, almost 12% of the Canadian population either are home children or are descendants of home children. They came to Canada as young children, orphans, and they have helped to build our country to where we are today. It is a deeply personal story of hardship and overcoming adversity. It is also a story about success and health, and the families and generations that followed their wonderful example of overcoming challenges, as well as the loneliness.

The story of the British home children struck home with me through my uncle who never spoke about it. My uncle was close to me because I was the same age as my cousin and we lived only two blocks from each other.

I found out about the British home children in 2008 when I first came to the House of Commons. A minister at the time, Greg Thompson, suggested that I should learn more about this issue. Through that research, I found the story of my uncle. With further research, I found the story of many others.

This summer, I had the opportunity and the privilege to go to Stratford to view a documentary film produced by Eleanor McGrath. Eleanor decided, after she had discovered one of the orphan homes in Toronto, to follow this story and to make this unbelievably beautiful film. We just viewed it this afternoon in the precinct. By the way, the first time I viewed the movie was last summer in Stratford.

For me, the highlight of the documentary was a man named Pat Maloney. He is a British home child and is in his nineties. His children were there. The most exciting part of the movie for me, if one does not experience a strong emotion when watching it, was seeing Pat Maloney standing on top of Lancaster.

My colleague mentioned how many of these individuals served and protected our country in the war. The story that I skipped over, and I will not have enough time to describe in its fullness, is the fact that they came here as eight year olds, 11 year olds, or 14 year olds, the age of my uncle when he came here. Some of them came as young as six months old. They were brought to Canada to serve as labourers, typically in agriculture and farming because the country needed that.

Some people view this as a scheme or a plan between different countries, something we must look back on with shame. However, my heart says, after speaking to home children and their descendants, that with the majority of the experiences they had, they would never have had lives they had if they had not come through what many believed in that time period in our history to be something necessary, to rescue them from poverty and life without hope in Great Britain, for the most part.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1740)

Many homes and groups came together. Groups like Barnardo's Homes and Fegan Homes brought these children into Canada.

First, imagine being abandoned by family and delivered to an orphanage in Great Britain. Imagine living there for years. At one time, 350,000 of these children were in Barnardo's Homes. Then, imagine a posting saying that they could go to Canada or to Australia.

I have one little sidebar on my uncle's story. He had a brother and they were both delivered to the orphanage in Great Britain together because their parents could no longer afford them. When it came time to depart, they were both to come to Canada. Something happened on the dock that day and instead of them both coming to Canada, my uncle, Ken Bickerton, came to Canada and his brother went to Australia. This was at age 14. The wonderful part of this story is they were reunited in my home when they were in their seventies.

I do not think any of us can imagine the joy or the things they held inside themselves. My cousins did not know all the details about their father. They did not know whether he was a British home child. My sister alerted me, as the eldest of our five siblings, to say that she thought Uncle Ken was a home child. There are many stories like this, many of them in my community. Many of them are stories that we cannot imagine in the day and age in which we live.

We need to put this in every history book in our country. Parliamentarians at every legislature need to stand and say that Canadians must learn this story. The size and scope of the British home children who came here and who built our country should be known to all.

In that regard, the documentary that I spoke about is called, *Forgotten*. I will make a shameless plug for it right now. It has been distributed at many festivals. It is an award-winning documentary. It will run on TVO later this month. When we know the date and time all parliamentarians can view this wonderful story of the British home children, we will let them know.

I again want to thank my colleague for shining a light on something I tried to shine a light on in 2009-10. My first motion in the House of Commons was to declare 2010 the year of the British home child. It has never been more rewarding for me than to stand in this chamber and see all sides of the House, all members rise in support of the year of the British home child on the 140th anniversary.

I ask all colleagues in the House to stand with my colleague and declare this the permanent day of the British home child as he has asked for in this motion.

● (1745)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague on this side has pointed out, it is remarkable how many members in the House of Commons are touched by this issue and who come from a line of children who were emigrated to this country, were not well treated, and should be recognized in history.

It gives me pleasure to add my support to the motion by the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry calling for

September 28 to be designated British home child day in Canada. It is hoped that by designating this day Canadians will become better informed of the treatment of these children and this will contribute at least in a small way to the healing process for those home children still with us and their families.

On February 16 of last year, the House unanimously passed a motion, tabled by the member for Montcalm, recognizing the injustice, abuse, and suffering endured by British home children and to offer a sincere apology to those still living and their descendants. The New Democrats have long supported the righting of this sad chapter in Canadian history, including through motions tabled by former NDP MP Alex Atamanenko and the current member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, both calling for a formal apology.

In 2009, the Government of Australia issued a formal apology, and in 2010 the Government of the United Kingdom did. In 2011, the Government of Ontario declared September 28 as British Home Child Day. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada has yet to apologize.

In November 2009, then Conservative immigration minister Jason Kenney, in refusing the request of an apology, stated, “Canadians don't expect their government to apologize for every sad event in our history”. From what we are hearing from my colleagues on this side, I do not think they agree with their former colleague.

During the period from 1869 until 1948 over 100,000 children of all ages were sent from the United Kingdom to Canada to be used as indentured farm workers and domestics. The last shipment of boys and girls arrived on Vancouver Island at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School, near Duncan, B.C.

Canadians were falsely led to believe these children were orphans who had been living on the streets of British cities, but in truth only 2% were. Most of the children came from intact families that had fallen on hard times. It was because of a lack of a social safety net that these families had no other choice than to surrender their children. For some families, this was meant as a temporary solution until the family got back on its feet. There are numerous reported cases where families seeking to recover their children were informed they had been sent to Canada or Australia. In other cases, families were simply sent an after-sailing notification informing them that their children had been emigrated.

The British organizations were paid for each child they emigrated. For each child, the Canadian government paid \$2, the British Government paid an additional \$2, and the receiving family paid a \$3 application fee.

Once in Canada the children were first sent to receiving homes across the country. Here in Ottawa, 1153 Wellington Street West, a little over a kilometre from this chamber, is where they were sent. From the receiving homes, the children were picked up by the families they were to work for, usually farms. The boys were assigned to farm labour and the girls to work as domestic servants.

*Private Members' Business*

The boys continued to work for these families until they were 18 years old and the girls until they were 21. While the receiving families contracted to house, feed, clothe, and educate these children, this was rarely the case. There was minimal effective inspection or monitoring. If an inspection was carried out, the child was interviewed in front of the receiving family.

While some of the children were fortunate to be accepted into homes as adopted children, many suffered. Many were simply used as slave labour and moved from one farm to another. Commonly, siblings were separated as well. Some of the children ran away or disappeared, some died of illness or injury resulting from negligence and abuse, and, sadly, some committed suicide.

Most home children faced stigmatization in Canada, were made to feel worthless, and told they were nobodies. Many, if not most, never even told their close families about being a home child, not wanting to face their shameful past or to avoid speaking of the painful experiences they may have endured. I am happy to hear of people revealing their stories publicly, here in the House.

● (1750)

Over 50 British organizations participated in this scheme. One of the largest was Dr. Barnardo's Homes. The organization immigrated 33,000 children to Canada. One of these children was Agnes Milsom, grandmother to my legislative assistant, Douglas Johnson.

Born in 1900, most of the records concerning Agnes's time in Britain were destroyed by German bombs in the Second World War. However, her family has been able to piece together a little of her life before she was sent to Canada.

Born in Bath, she was surrendered to Bernardo Homes at the age of five following the tragic death of her parents in a fire. At the age of nine, she was sent to Canada to work as a domestic servant for a family in Tweed, Ontario. The family paid Bernardo Homes \$7.00 for Agnes.

After she left her service, Agnes went to work at a hospital in Peterborough and later married John Zavitz. The couple moved back to a farm near Tweed and had five daughters. Agnes died in 1927, shortly after giving birth to Margaret, her only surviving daughter, and so would not have heard people recognizing her. Margaret has said, "My mother was a slave, pure and simple."

A Statistics Canada estimate some years ago put the number of British home children descendants in Canada today at around four million, or as many as one in eight Canadians. The descendants of these children are found in all parts of Canada, including here on Parliament Hill. While many remain hopeful of an official apology for the maltreatment of these children, the least we can do is recognize them through the declaration of September 28 as British home child day.

On behalf of my incredible legislative assistant, his mother, and his grandmother, who I am sure is watching from above, I hope that all in this place stand and support this proposal.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with much emotion that I rise in the House to speak about the British home children.

When I was young and full of enthusiasm, I studied history. What I like about history is that the more we learn about it, the more we realize how much we do not know. Every day, we learn something new about our history.

About two months ago, I was sitting in the House and listening closely to the speech given by my colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. That is when I discovered the very moving story of the British home children. I thought I knew my country's history, but I realized that I knew very little. This is a story that is intertwined with the history of Canada in the 20th century, and even a little before that. Between 1869 and 1948, 100,000 children left Britain for Canada and Australia. One hundred thousand children arrived in Canada.

Who were these children? They were orphans, street kids, abandoned children. As with anything else, things born of good intentions sometimes end badly.

When the British home children program was created in the 19th century, the idea was to literally remove children, some of them two or three years old or even younger, from the miserable conditions they were living in, many of them on the streets of London, and take them to the glorious promised land of Canada.

For many of them, it was a dream come true. They were welcomed by farm families, they grew up, they went to school, they were cared for. Later, they started their own families and had descendants. For others, it was a tragedy of the highest order. Some were taken in by families that did not mean well, people who exploited them as slave labour on their farms. These people gave them the bare minimum they needed to survive, neglected their education and social life, and fed them just enough to keep them useful on the farm, literally turning them into slaves.

Over the years, 100,000 English children were brought to this country. Now here is a sobering thought: we estimate that nearly 10% of the current Canadian population is descended from those children. That brings it home. Those children were their great-grandfathers, their great-grandmothers, their ancestors five or six generations back who came to live here, and many of them have been forgotten.

I love my country, and I love its history, which I have studied extensively, but I did not know about this chapter in our history until I heard my colleague talk about it in the House. I am not exaggerating when I say that since then, I have thought of those children almost constantly. Nothing moves me more than the story of unhappy children.

*Private Members' Business*

Let us look at the reality of the situation now. Today, there are millions of Canadians who are descended from these men and women who were torn from their homeland as children to come live here, many of whom suffered, some of whom were nonetheless successful. Their sixth-, seventh- and even eighth-generation descendants are with us today. These are proud people. They contribute to our country today, just as their ancestors did, despite the challenges they may have faced. That is why we must celebrate the successes of those children, and especially their descendants, who contribute to the wealth and growth of our country. We can be proud of our ancestors, especially when we know that our ancestors may have suffered terrible human tragedies and hopelessness. People are incredibly resilient.

● (1800)

Life made sure that this courage, this tenacity, this will to survive was passed down from one generation to the next, and today there are millions of Canadians who are the descendants of those abandoned children who came here to Canada to contribute to the prosperity and growth of this country.

Yes, the descendants can be proud of their ancestors who have been helping to build this country for generations. Yes, they can be proud.

In a way, we are all the product of our ancestors. We were not around when our great-grandparents decided to settle down, here for some, elsewhere for others, but we should all be proud of our own personal roots. Sometimes the past includes horror stories. Maybe our ancestors were criminals. Maybe our ancestors were lunatics, or maybe they experienced tragedy, but life goes on.

This is a legacy that must be preserved, that we must all know and teach our children. Every story deserves to be heard. About 40 years ago, Alex Haley wrote the book *Roots*, which told the story of his great-great-great-grandfather, Kunta Kinte, who was taken from his native village of Juffureh in 1767 and sold into slavery in America. Seven generations later, that man's story was told and broadcast on television in the famous series *Roots*, which we called *Racines* in French. Tens of millions of African-Americans finally had a name, an image, a reality for telling their story.

Sadly, the British home children may at one time have been embarrassed by their story, uncomfortable with the reality they experienced, unwilling to boast about the challenges they overcame to succeed and settle here, have a family with generations to follow, but today, their descendants can be extraordinarily proud of their ancestors.

They managed to overcome all these challenges and grow up despite the pain they endured and the indignity they suffered at the hands of certain authorities who either turned a blind eye or encouraged the crime of exploiting children on a farm. That is clearly a crime regardless of whether we are talking about the 19th century or the 20th century.

The courage of these people is to be commended. They should not be embarrassed or ashamed of what happened. On the contrary, they should be proud. The best way to be proud of one's ancestors is to live the life we were given, carry on the extraordinary legacy of our ancestors and teach it to future generations.

Everyone has their own story with its share of pain. A painful family history need not dictate how one lives one's life. Rather, that history should be a source of inspiration to do greater things, become even stronger, rise up and proudly embrace one's truth. What I am saying is quite philosophical, but there are words, and then there is reality. Some four million Canadians are descendants of the children who ended up here because of painful circumstances but who went on to help Canada prosper and succeed.

Better still, there are people right here in this House who are descended from the British children we are paying tribute to today. Through those descendants, we honour the hundreds of thousands of children who came here and helped build this great nation.

● (1805)

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Resuming debate. Right of reply, the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise this evening.

[*English*]

I would like to begin by thanking my hon. colleagues from all sides of the House for their comments, insights, and stories from constituents, which highlight the scope and influence the British home children have had on our shared story as Canadians from coast to coast. Despite writing a vital chapter in the story of Canada, many Canadians have never heard a whisper of their stories.

As I mentioned in my earlier remarks, over 10% of the Canadian population can trace their heritage directly to the British home children, yet so many will never know the truth of their ancestry due, in part, to the fact that many British home children carried a stigma of neglect, abuse, torment, and isolation. This burden they carried, which was completely unfounded, was carried long into their adulthood, with so many not wanting to talk about their early lives, therefore burying a piece of our country's history.

From the speeches and comments by my colleagues from all parties, it is clear that these Canadians and their descendants are more than deserving of being recognized with an official day of remembrance that would take place on September 28 of every year.

Until recent years, very few Canadians knew about British home children. Their stories of hardship, courage, determination, and perseverance were not part of Canadian history books. This needs to change. The more than 100,000 British home children, from infancy to 18 years of age, who were sent to Canada from Great Britain, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales between 1869 and 1948 helped to build the foundation of our emerging country. Many were farm labourers and domestic workers in homes spread right across this wonderful country called Canada.



Despite the good intentions of individuals, philanthropists, faith-based groups, and charitable organizations that sought to care for these unfortunate children and truly believed that they were doing a good and noble thing for them, unfortunately there were those who sought to take advantage of these children. Often the children went into rural areas, where they were seen by many as cheap labour, and worked from before sunrise to after sunset.

Although many of the home children were treated very poorly, neglected, and mentally and physically abused, many others did experience better lives. Some were welcomed as one of the family and were loved and nurtured. Most of these children drew on their outstanding courage, strength, and perseverance and went on to lead healthy and productive lives. They contributed to the growth and development of Canada, with many British home children enlisting in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

In my opinion, and that of thousands of Canadians right across this wonderful country, the Government of Canada should undertake whatever means it has at its disposal to help preserve and highlight this important part of our history. Passing this motion will be a small step in making that mission come to pass.

I have had the honour of sponsoring this motion. When I first heard about this wonderful cause, I researched it, in part, and was intrigued. As I watched the wonderful film this afternoon by my new friend, Eleanor McGrath, everyone in the room was very emotional. Many of us were made tearful by this wonderful documentary.

When we look at the suffering and strength of these wonderful people, we have to honour them by remembering them on one day each year. Therefore, I urge all my colleagues from every side of this House to lend their support to my motion to ensure that the stories and the names of the British home children are forever ingrained in the story of Canada.

I thank the descendants of the British home children for bringing this to our attention here in Parliament.

• (1810)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

Wednesday, February 7, 2018, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, back on October 6, 2017, I asked the minister a question. TransCanada was forced to abandon energy east after the Liberal government changed the rules halfway through the game. Foreign oil won and Canadians lost. How much did we lose? We lost billions of dollars. We know we lost at least \$56 billion that could have gone from western Canada to the Maritimes, and specifically, New Brunswick.

The prospects for energy workers in Canada have been grim. I am going to talk about New Brunswick. The Liberal government holds all 32 seats in the Maritimes, yet it does not want its people out there working. It does not want to accept oil from western Canada.

In early October of 2017, in the face of government regulatory uncertainty, TransCanada decided to pull the plug on its proposed \$15.7 billion energy east pipeline. Unfortunately, the cancelled energy project is just one of many under the Liberal government day in and day out. Needless to say, we have an argument right now in this country between the provinces of Alberta and B.C.

Will the Prime Minister tonight, in Edmonton, stand up and defend western Canadian oil? We are looking for a response tonight from the Prime Minister, as he went from Winnipeg last night to Edmonton. We want to see his answer to the Alberta oilfield workers, many of whom are unemployed, even though the price of oil today is around \$66 to \$67 and could go to \$80. That is the world price. Unfortunately, we are not getting the world price. We are still down in the twenties.

One of the central challenges faced by Canadian energy producers is the development means for the product in western Canada to help provinces like Quebec and the Maritimes. There is Asia and Europe. We need this pipeline to get our product to tidewater. As we know, that did not happen in 2017. It is a big challenge. We are seeing companies move out of this country.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Just two days ago in Calgary, Brent Conway of Trinidad Drilling said that he cannot get federal and provincial governments together to support them. Three days ago, Trinidad Drilling, which is out of Calgary, moved two of its rigs from Alberta to Texas. One could say, “Well, who really cares.” However, Mr. Conway said he was doubtful they would ever return. He said that the U.S. has changed its tax policy and is open for business, but in Canada they continue to hit roadblocks day in and day out. CEO Karl Rudd of Akita Drilling has done the same thing. He has moved rigs from Alberta to the United States. Building pipelines and starting to export oil is what the United States is all about. CIBC capital market researchers expect Canadian oil and activity to be very depressed this year in Canada.

I want to know what the Liberal government is going to do to stand up for pipelines in this country and western Canadian oil.

• (1815)

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood for his question and also for acknowledging that Atlantic Canada does exist. It must be the 32 loud voices of the Atlantic MPs that has brought this back to reality for the Conservatives.

Canadians know how important the energy sector is to our economy and our country. It is a major source of employment and investment, and it produces significant revenues for governments at all levels. In 2016, the oil and gas industry directly employed almost 400,000 Canadians and contributed approximately \$100 billion to our nominal GDP. It also produced billions of dollars in government revenues, revenues that pay for our hospitals, schools, new bridges and safer roads, and for the social programs that make us who we are.

No country would ever think about leaving the reserves that we are fortunate enough to have in the ground, no country would turn its back on the jobs and opportunities that it represents, and no country would put all of its oil and gas exports in a single American basket. That is why we launched a comprehensive review of Canada's environmental and regulatory systems. We know the energy sector's future depends on project reviews that are more predictable and timely without compromising on public consultation, indigenous reconciliation, and environmental protections, but we also moved quickly to introduce a set of interim principles to review major projects already in the queue.

What has been the result? Our government has approved a number of major resource projects, including the Trans Mountain expansion and Line 3 replacement pipelines. These new pipelines will diversify our markets, are being built with improved environmental safety and relationships with our indigenous partners, and will create thousands of good middle-class jobs. These approvals were the right decision then, and they are the right decision now.

I want to be very clear on that. Those two pipelines were approved because they are in the national interest. They were approved based on solid science, an assessment of the upstream GHG emissions, and meaningful consultations with indigenous peoples. What is more, we would have had the same approach with energy east and no one wanted that to happen any more than my New Brunswick colleagues and I.

Contrary to what the member opposite says, there was no changing of the rules midway through. In fact, just the opposite is true. We implemented our interim principles in January 2016, three months before TransCanada resubmitted its plans for energy east. I cannot speak for TransCanada, but I think it is reasonable to infer that it looked at our interim approach and decided that it could work with it. Why else would it have proceeded with its submission?

As the Minister of Natural Resources has said numerous times, nothing has changed from our perspective. Why did TransCanada choose to abandon the energy east project? Again, I cannot speak for the company, but I know what one of our country's leading experts said. Andrew Leach is an associate professor at the Alberta School of Business and claims the main culprit in energy east's demise was the re-emergence of TransCanada's Keystone XL project south of the border. In fact, Professor Leach called Keystone XL “an 800,000-barrel-a-day express line to refining centres in the United States” and that it “presented a more attractive option for shippers than Energy East”. In short, Professor Leach concluded that TransCanada made a business decision, and that is its right.

• (1820)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board announced a tougher review process that would take into account indirect greenhouse gas contributions, among other factors.

Since the member is from New Brunswick, she would know this. TransCanada planned to hire 3,716 people locally to help with the construction of this project and 97 would be retained to operate it once it was complete. Saint John Mayor Don Darling was looking to energy east as a source of momentum to get the economy going. He presides over a declining city in a declining province and had been counting on energy east to help them turn the corner.

How does she feel about the mayor of Saint John, Don Darling, being quoted as saying that it was a catastrophe to not get these 3,716 jobs in an area of the country that we all know needs employment?

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart:** Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. We did not change the rules midstream.

The National Energy Board, an independent federal regulator, chose to expand the scope of its regulatory review on energy east, but we made it clear to the company that we, as the Government of Canada, would ultimately use the same process that resulted in the approval of the TMX and Line 3 replacement pipelines. We even offered to the NEB to conduct the upstream and downstream GHG assessments to avoid any costs to the proponent. Nothing has changed, nor was anything going to change, no matter what the member opposite claims. The facts are clear on this.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with regret that I must continue to raise concerns about the lack of action to protect our iconic species, the woodland caribou.

On October 6, I put a question to the minister about what she was intending to do to finally take action for the recovery of the woodland caribou in Canada, particularly in my province of Alberta.

In November, a petition was filed by two environmental organizations, the Alberta Wilderness Association, a longstanding conservation group in Alberta and the David Suzuki Foundation, along with the Cold Lake First Nation. The petition called on the government to exercise its powers under the Species at Risk Act, because of the dire strait of five herds in northern Alberta: the Cold Lake herd, the Richardson herd, the Red Earth herd, the West Side Athabasca herd, and the East Side Athabasca herd.

We know the federal government has been stalling on taking action, saying it has given the provinces the opportunity to come back with a recovery plan, and what they will do to protect the herds. The problem is that thus far from Alberta, we have simply received a list of potential strategies. Those who are concerned about the plight of these iconic species have given the government until April to get that range plan from Alberta, but in the meantime, these are rapidly depleting herds.

The recovery strategy itself sets a target of no more than 35% of habitat disturbed for each population of caribou, and to give them a 60% chance to be self-sustaining. Yet, for these five herds, there is already 72% to 88% of their habitat disturbed, and the herds continue to decline rapidly.

I am calling upon the government. Is it ready to move forward, finally step up to the plate, and exercise the powers that only it holds under the Endangered Species Act, and under the Biodiversity Convention that Canada has enacted as law. It is only within the power of the Government of Canada to make sure that the biodiversity is protected. Over and over again, we have Canadians expressing their concerns that this iconic species is disappearing. We have a specific case here.

If Alberta and the other provinces do not come up with a credible plan to generally protect this species, and not simply put it in a zoo, will the government tell us today that it is willing to step in immediately, and as the petitioners are asking implement some emergency orders?

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for her interest in this matter.

Our government is deeply committed to conserving Canada's biodiversity and to maintaining and improving our species at risk protection and recovery.

As everyone knows, the boreal caribou is a priority for this government. We are committed to effectively upholding our legal

*Adjournment Proceedings*

obligations under the Species at Risk Act and ensuring compliance with all federal laws.

In July 2017, the federal government released a proposed action plan for the boreal caribou. The action plan sets out the federal government's plan to work with partners and stakeholders to support the recovery and protection of the boreal caribou. That plan includes actions and investments to further research and science to support recovery; recovering and protecting caribou through conservation agreements with other governments and regulations on federal lands; and reporting our progress to Canadians.

The provinces and territories also have a great responsibility to manage land, natural resources, and wildlife, and protect species at risk that live within their jurisdiction. The 2012 recovery strategy for boreal caribou, which was produced by federal, provincial, and territorial governments, recognized that the vast majority of critical habitat is on provincial and territorial land. The recovery strategy therefore included a five-year deadline for provinces and territories to provide the federal government with protection plans on a range-by-range basis for boreal caribou.

In October 2017, we also published a five-year progress report on the boreal caribou, which gave an overview of the progress made in achieving the objectives of the recovery strategy and reported on the status of the caribou populations and the disturbance to their habitat. As of October 2017, every province and territory was still working on developing their range-by-range protection plan.

The department will perform an official analysis of the measures that the provinces and territories have taken to protect critical habitat for woodland caribou, as well as any gaps in critical habitat protection, and will report to Canadians in April 2018. If the April report shows that the provinces and territories are failing to implement adequate protection measures, federal legislation requires our government to recommend that federal protection be applied to non-federal lands. We are currently in discussions with several provinces and territories regarding conservation agreements that could expedite and support their efforts to complete their range plans, in close consultation with indigenous groups and key stakeholders.

Among other things, we are also working on creating a multilateral forum to incorporate new knowledge and scientific data into woodland caribou conservation and recovery efforts. The national boreal caribou knowledge consortium will give the government, indigenous peoples, stakeholders, and scientists a forum where they can share information and lessons learned on a regular basis.

Ultimately, the success of the efforts to restore the caribou population and ensure its long-term prosperity depends on the willingness of all parties to work together to find innovative scientific solutions.

Our government believes we must seize the opportunity to restore the woodland caribou population and promote the prosperous and sustainable use of Canada's natural resources.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I am deeply troubled. I am hearing a consistent theme from the Liberal government that this is mostly the responsibility of the provinces and territories. I remind them that there is a very famous Supreme Court of Canada decision, the Friends of the Oldman River Society, that clearly says the federal and provincial governments share responsibility and jurisdiction over the environment.

Clearly, the Species at Risk Act is under the mandate of the federal government.

The answer is not more consultation and more science. This has been going on for decades. We have a deep problem and the government needs to recognize it. We have already had one previous federal environment minister chastised by the Federal Court for the fact that, when he made his decision on whether or not there was a proper recovery strategy for these caribou, he had failed to consider the treaty rights of first nations.

In this case, we have the Cold Lake First Nations relying for its survival in winter specifically on these herds, and these herds already only—

• (1830)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Order. The parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Cormier:** Mr. Speaker, I again thank my colleague.

As I stated in my previous reply, we recognize that the woodland caribou population has declined in the past two years primarily because of human activity. Our government is very concerned about the state of this caribou population in Canada and the impact of its decline on indigenous peoples and all Canadians. That is exactly why we are stepping up our efforts to address the situation.

Canadians expect us to work with the provinces and territories to find ways to protect this species while continuing to support the sustainable use of our natural resources. I will repeat that this is a very important species for our government. We will continue to work with all our partners to re-establish this species as quickly as possible.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:31 p.m.)

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