



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 6, 2018**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 6, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)  
[English]

### FISHERIES ACT

**Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (for the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-68, an act to amend the Fisheries Act and other acts in consequence.

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

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### PETITIONS

#### FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the international day to end female genital mutilation, and it gives me great pleasure to present this petition, which was signed by over 25,000 Canadians, calling on the government to reverse its decision to remove FGM as a harmful practice listed in Canada's citizenship guide. I know that these people would like to see the government do more for this issue on this day. I commend them for their dedication and for tabling petitions. Signing a petition does make a difference.

#### PHARMACARE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table a petition today regarding a national pharmacare program, signed by residents of Winnipeg North, and I believe it goes well beyond that. For example, earlier this morning I met with the Canadian Labour Congress and it, too, is advocating for a national pharmacare program. It would be wonderful to ultimately incorporate this into the Canada Health Act. This is what my constituents are looking for.

[Translation]

#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East. The petition is

based on United Nations Security Council resolution 2334, which states that colonies in occupied Palestinian territory have no legal validity, violate international law, and are an obstacle to just and lasting peace for all.

The petition is signed by 3,975 people who are calling on Canada to take action and demanding that the Israeli government cease all such settlement activity.

• (1005)  
[English]

#### GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a petition in which the petitioners draw the attention of the Liberal government to the fact that in early 2017 roughly five tonnes of genetically modified salmon was sold in Canada, and that this salmon likely ended up on our plates without our knowing it. Canadians are concerned about the lack of information about GMOs. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban the sale and breeding of genetically modified salmon in Canada until labelling standards to warn consumers are put in place.

[Translation]

#### SECURITY CERTIFICATES

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, I have the honour to present a petition signed by my constituents. The petitioners are calling on the government to end the security certificate process.

[English]

The petitioners believe that security certificates are inherently open to abuse and deny an individual the right to a fair trial. They ask the House to take action to end this practice.

\* \* \*

[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.

*Business of Supply*

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC)** moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, when any Member violates the Conflict of Interest Act, including accepting gifts or hospitality (section 11), furthering private interests (section 21), being in a conflict of interest (section 5), and accepting travel (section 12), or violates the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, and, in so doing, incurs a cost upon the taxpayer, that Member must repay those costs to the taxpayer.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the official opposition moved a very important motion in the House today. This morning, I would like to make sure we give this situation the serious consideration it deserves.

[*English*]

Before I go on, Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

It is shameful that this motion is required, but we are in an unprecedented situation. A sitting Prime Minister has broken the law. He spent \$200,000 of taxpayer money on personal travel that turned out to be illegal. These are serious violations of the public trust.

[*Translation*]

As members of Parliament, we all come here bearing the trust of those who elected us. No matter our political stripe, we were all elected by hard-working Canadians from Regina to Rimouski, from Hamilton to Halifax, and from Montreal to Maple Ridge.

[*English*]

These Canadians, citizens and taxpayers, gave us their confidence. It is a fundamental trust, one every member must always bear in mind as we go about our work as parliamentarians.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

Codes and rules have their place, but most importantly, we must all strive to do our work to the best of our ability. As MPs, we have rules and codes of conduct that define what is appropriate and what is not.

[*English*]

The code for members is very clear. It reads:

Given that service in Parliament is a public trust, the House of Commons recognizes and declares that Members are expected

- (a) to serve the public interest and represent constituents to the best of their abilities;
- (b) to fulfill their public duties with honesty and uphold the highest standards so as to avoid real or apparent conflicts of interests, and maintain and enhance public confidence and trust in the integrity of each Member and in the House of Commons;

(c) to perform their official duties and functions and arrange their private affairs in a manner that bears the closest public scrutiny, an obligation that may not be fully discharged by simply acting within the law;

(d) to arrange their private affairs so that foreseeable real or apparent conflicts of interest may be prevented from arising, but if such a conflict does arise, to resolve it in a way that protects the public interest; and

(e) not to accept any gift or benefit connected with their position that might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgment or integrity except in accordance with the provisions of this Code.

We ought to live up to these standards without being told to simply because we understand the public trust we bear. We should not agree to these parts of the code because the Ethics Commissioner has to tell us. That is the shameful situation we are in today because of the actions of the Prime Minister.

The code, along with the Conflict of Interest Act, makes it clear when any of us has failed in these responsibilities, and in the case of the Conflict of Interest Act, it is a violation of federal law.

[*Translation*]

On December 20, the Ethics Commissioner reported that the Prime Minister of Canada had contravened four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act when he agreed to spend his personal vacation on the Aga Khan's private island. This is the first time in the history of Canada that a sitting prime minister has broken the law.

[*English*]

The details of the Prime Minister's situation demonstrate further how he broke the trust given to him by the people of Canada. The Aga Khan is a prominent religious and political figure respected around the world. He has admirers on all sides of this House. Indeed, the previous Conservative government had a very positive and constructive relationship with him.

[*Translation*]

His charitable organizations do important work to support people in need in many countries.

[*English*]

However, because of his relationship with the government, he is also a registered lobbyist here. His organizations often seek funds from the Government of Canada. These are facts that we must be mindful of when any of us have dealings with him, and these are facts that the Prime Minister himself was aware of when he accepted these illegal gifts. On this count, the Prime Minister has failed in his duties.

In fact, the Prime Minister has made a victim of the Aga Khan. The Aga Khan has been put into this situation because of the negligence and shameful actions of the Prime Minister, and our sympathies certainly go to the Aga Khan for any grief that the Prime Minister has caused him.

Though describing him as a friend, the facts of the Ethics Commissioner's report show that the two had almost no relationship until the Prime Minister took over the leadership of the Liberal Party, and ultimately became Prime Minister. In that light, the travel the Prime Minister took to his private island was clearly a gift.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister never recused himself from any official dealings relating to the Aga Khan or his business with the Government of Canada. The Prime Minister's account of this relationship showed either extreme naïveté or disingenuousness. Neither is acceptable for someone in his position.

[Translation]

More than any other public figure, the Prime Minister of Canada must be transparent and accountable for his actions. Not only did he break the law, but his actions cost Canadian taxpayers \$200,000. The illegal gift he accepted was very costly. This is what it costs taxpayers when the Prime Minister travels abroad.

[English]

No one should begrudge the Prime Minister the costs associated with official travel, but he has to be respectful of the fact that taxpayer money is not his to spend as he sees fit. The more complex his travels, such as a trip to a private island, the more taxpayers have to cover to ensure that the Prime Minister is safe and secure, in contact with the government, and able to carry out his duties.

• (1015)

[Translation]

Those expenses add up quickly. They are now 70% higher than the initial estimates provided to the public. To a prime minister who plans to rack up billions of dollars in deficits for decades, \$200,000 may not sound like very much.

[English]

I think every member of this House can readily imagine needs at home that could be met with \$200,000. That is the backdrop against which we are discussing this motion today.

On the weekend, the Prime Minister did something unbelievable. On the weekend, the Prime Minister told a wounded Canadian vet, a Canadian hero, that he was asking too much of this Liberal government, that veterans in Canada were asking more than the government could give.

That is the backdrop of what we are discussing today. The Prime Minister sees no problem in sticking Canadian taxpayers with the bill for his illegal travel, and then has the audacity to look a wounded war hero in the face and say that he is asking for too much.

Conservatives reject that, and Conservatives demand that this Prime Minister apologize for that shameful remark.

Let us backtrack a little to December, when this report was first publicized. The Prime Minister claimed that he accepted responsibility. He claimed that he accepted the findings of the Ethics Commissioner's report. He claimed to offer an apology.

It turns out, weeks later, that the apology was completely phony. An apology is meaningless if it does not also accept the consequences. This Prime Minister is trying to avoid any consequences for breaking the law. That does not meet the bar that he has set for himself. It does not meet the bar that Canadians expect public officials to hold themselves accountable to.

If the Prime Minister is truly sorry, if the Prime Minister truly accepts the findings of the report and accepts the conclusion, then he

### *Business of Supply*

will make amends, just as any of us do in our lives. When any other Canadian, in a workplace, in a family environment, in an interaction with friends or neighbours, offers an apology, he or she offers a solution to make it right.

To make it right, the Prime Minister has to pay back taxpayers the \$200,000 that he cost them for his illegal trip.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is important to realize is that the Prime Minister worked with a great deal of co-operation with Mary Dawson, the commissioner. The commissioner came out with a report, and the Prime Minister has been very clear in his co-operation and following through with respect to the report.

I believe that the Prime Minister has done the right thing. The Conservatives want to continue to focus on this particular issue, even though the Prime Minister has followed through on the ideas that came out of that report. The commissioner went to the committee and made a presentation. We understand it is time for us to move on and continue to focus on what is important to Canadians. That is why we have a Prime Minister who is reaching out, going to town halls in Canada, and the reason we continue to focus on Canada's middle class.

Does the leader of the official opposition not recognize that what Canadians want us to be talking about and focusing on are the important issues to them, such as the creation of jobs and advancing Canada's middle class?

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to offer my sincere sympathies to the hon. member for Winnipeg North and all the Liberal MPs who have been victims in this whole sordid ordeal. The Prime Minister has left it to them to defend his illegal actions. I certainly do not envy the position of Liberal MPs who have to answer their constituents and explain why they will be voting against this motion to hold their own Prime Minister to account.

I would like to ask the hon. member what exactly the Prime Minister has done. He has not done anything. He took the illegal trip, hid it for over a year, refused to come clean with the costs, and kept hiding other aspects of the trip. It was only after the Ethics Commissioner had to conduct a full investigation that these facts came to light. He has not accepted any of the consequences that should come along with his illegal trip.

The member has the audacity to mention the Ethics Commissioner coming to committee. When will the Prime Minister go to committee? The ethics committee invited the Prime Minister to come and explain his actions. The Prime Minister refused to go.

• (1020)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. leader of the official opposition for his remarks. He did a good job in capturing the sense of frustration we feel on this side of the House, and that Canadians are feeling with a Prime Minister who has been found to have broken the law and does not seem to be suffering any consequences for having done so.

*Business of Supply*

On this side, we are also very much aware of some of the other ethical challenges with the Liberal government with respect to conflict of interest. In particular, I am thinking about the finance minister and the controversy around Bill C-27, which is going to have a financial impact for Canadians far above the \$200,000 that the Prime Minister's trip had. For that reason, we are wondering: why the narrow focus of this motion?

We agree that there should be consequences for the Prime Minister. We support that principle. However, we know there are a lot of other problems with conflicts of interest with the Liberal government. We wonder why the official opposition chose to have such a narrow focus rather than using this as an opportunity to ensure there are consequences for any of the members of government who violate conflict of interest provisions.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer:** Mr. Speaker, I point out that the way the motion is worded would capture any violations of the conflict of interest code. Any acceptance of illegal gifts, or any time that costs are incurred upon the taxpayer, that individual would have to pay it back. We are dealing with this in the backdrop of the Ethics Commissioner report, but the hon. member is very right to point out that this is becoming a pattern with the Liberal government. The finance minister himself was found in violation of ethics rules when he failed to disclose his French villa. There were serious questions around the timing of tabled legislation that would benefit Morneau Shepell, a company he had direct interests in. We still have questions about aspects of that.

What this motion is aimed at, though, is to show the lack of accountability on this Prime Minister. This is not a suspicion that we have. We do not think he broke ethics rules. We do not think he broke the law. We do not have a hunch that he did something wrong when he took that illegal trip. In black and white, the independent, non-partisan Ethics Commissioner came to that conclusion. As with any other time in public life and private life for every other Canadian, when rules are broken, consequences have to be imposed.

The Prime Minister is trying to get away with accepting these illegal gifts without facing any consequences. That is shameful.

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to rise today to speak to our opposition day motion. I want to thank our leader, the leader of the official opposition, for sharing his time with me today.

Let us begin with a simple question. What is this motion about? I appreciate the comments that came from my hon. colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona. He asked a question about why we introduced this motion and why it appears to be narrowly focused.

I am a big believer that if one is not faithful and honourable in the small things in life, one will not be faithful and honourable in the big things in life. I believe that same principle applies to us here in the House of Commons. Character is what one does when no one is watching. Character is what one does when one knows one can get away with it. We are calling this specific issue to light. We have been talking about it during last week and this week, because we believe that Canadians deserve a prime minister who will be faithful and honourable, an integrist, in those things that look small. It is not so much about the \$200,000, although that is a big amount; it is about a

prime minister who, if he is truly sorry, will follow through on what might look like a small thing and pay back the money to the taxpayer. We will then be able to see what kind of character he and his government have when it comes to the big things.

In a nutshell, this motion establishes what we as members of Parliament all adhere to, and should be adhering to, in our behaviour. It is what Canadians would expect from us. This motion establishes and reaffirms our commitment as members of Parliament to be accountable and transparent.

Sometimes as we are doing our duties, we break the rules. We do not do it maliciously. However, sometimes it is done knowingly. I will give two examples where we, as members of Parliament, should be responsible if we break those rules.

Letters sent to the general public are covered under our franking privileges. We are allowed to send letters out to our constituents. There had been some changes in the rules around whether we could send letters to people outside of our constituency. There was a certain point during that transition when members of Parliament sent letters to people outside of their constituency and then found out afterwards that they were breaking the rules. Those members of Parliament could not just say they were sorry for breaking the rules and did not know those were the rules; rather, they had to make it right. They had to personally write a cheque to the Receiver General to cover the taxpayers' costs for when they broke the rules. It may or may not have been malicious, but the rules were broken and amends had to be made. That is the right thing to do.

Here is another example. Let us say that a member of Parliament was given five tickets for him or her and their family to attend an Elton John concert. That member of Parliament then tells the House of Commons that he or she will be going on parliamentary business and claims a plane trip, hotel, and per diems. However, the House of Commons then comes back and asks if that was parliamentary business. It is discovered that it was not and that he or she had taken an illegal gift, thereby doubly breaking the rules. Obviously that member of Parliament would be asked to pay back the cost of the trip, hotels, and per diems. That is also the right thing to do. That is probably an example of knowingly breaking the rules.

Those are two examples where members of Parliament broke the rules, and in breaking the rules used taxpayer dollars and were asked to pay those dollars back. Dare I say that if they did not pay those dollars back, their wages would be garnisheed. The House of Commons would not give them a choice; they would have to pay back those expenses. This motion establishes that we all agree with that. On this side of the House, we all agree with that. I certainly hope that the Liberal members of Parliament would agree with that as well.

This leads me to the biggest example that we have thus far, and what I would say is the biggest breach. That is the one we have been talking about for the last couple of weeks, which is the Prime Minister's illegal holiday.

*Business of Supply*

•(1025)

This is the second time in less than 24 hours that I have risen to speak about it. It seems like more and more often, all we are talking about in this place is the Liberals' conflict of interest. Whether it is the Minister of Finance or the Prime Minister breaking the rules, being investigated, or not recusing themselves from discussions, this is a Liberal pattern that does not seem to end.

Last evening during the debate on Bill C-50, the Liberals' cash for access legislation, I pointed out to the House that the Liberals' very own bill has a requirement to pay the money back when fundraisers stray outside of the rules. It is a sound principle, and one that is mirrored in all kinds of regulatory and legal structures. Why is there a common requirement to pay it back, whether to us as members of Parliament, the general public, in society, or even in Bill C-50, if they fundraise illegally? Why does it exist? It is so that there is a meaningful incentive to encourage people to follow the law. It is that simple.

That is exactly what today's motion calls for. However, regrettably, we are not simply talking about an abstract principle. We have a very real and serious case before us. It is the former ethics commissioner's report on the Prime Minister's winter trip to the Aga Khan's island, better known as billionaire island. In her report, Mary Dawson said that the Prime Minister broke not one, not two, not even three, but four separate requirements of the Conflict of Interest Act.

I want to thank the quick-thinking member, our Leader of the Opposition, as he was the one who submitted the original request for an investigation once the news broke. We were asking the Prime Minister about the trip, and he constantly said it was a legal vacation and he was with someone who was a close friend. We have now found out that he had not talked to the Aga Khan in over 30 years. They are not close friends, and it was blatantly misleading Canadians. The Prime Minister knew very well that he had not seen or talked to the Aga Khan in over 30 years, but he got up day after day in the House, and he forced the House leader to defend his illegal behaviour. In doing so, and this brings it back to the motion, he incurred expenses of over \$200,000 of taxpayers' dollars.

This is not a question of him having incurred those expenses anyway. If that were the question, no one would have to pay restitution. Everyone would say, "I would have received a car anyway. Even if I stole a car and did not give it back, I would have needed a car anyway. I would have used some money anyway, so I took someone else's money, but I would have found a way to get money anyway." That is the most illogical defence I have ever heard, and I am surprised that we are still hearing it from the Liberals.

The fact is that the Prime Minister broke the law, and in doing so he forced the RCMP to be complicit in his breaking the law. I would be incredibly interested to know if anyone in the Prime Minister's Office or who was part of his security team told him, "We are all now breaking the rules by taking this illegal holiday and going on this helicopter." If he was told, did he say to them "Oh, don't worry. The rules don't apply to me. I can do whatever I want because I am the Prime Minister." He likes to refer to himself in the third person, even when he is outside of this place. It is quite remarkable to watch.

Instead of answering questions about this, instead of paying back the money, the Prime Minister was signing autographs during question period yesterday. The House leader had to answer for his irresponsible illegal behaviour, and he sat there signing autographs. Not only is it shameful, it is embarrassing to watch. If the Prime Minister cannot be accountable, honourable, and transparent in what is considered something small, then what do we have? Let us be honest, he has a family fortune. We are not talking about someone in poverty who cannot afford to pay for something they shoplifted. We are talking about someone who brags about his family fortune. He can afford to pay the taxpayer back.

There is so much connected to this breach, including, as our leader talked about, when we have a government that is disrespectful, cold hearted to our veterans, to our men and women in uniform. Would the Prime Minister please show leadership, be accountable, pay this back, and let us get on with doing something good for Canadians and stop taking from them?

•(1030)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to convey what Mary Dawson said in committee and I would ask her to pay close attention to this. She said:

If the Prime Minister had gone somewhere else on his own initiative, and it wasn't with a problematic person—not that the Aga Khan is problematic—or in a problematic situation, a lot of those costs would have been incurred anyway...The security costs are huge, I think. Actually, that's not my bailiwick at all. That was not my bailiwick. That is PCO or whoever pays that money. There's a whole establishment there that looks after the Prime Minister's security, and that expense is incurred whatever he does.

It is important to recognize that the Prime Minister co-operated with Mary Dawson, the former commissioner, in every way. He listened and he followed through with a number of ideas that the commissioner brought forward.

I am sure the member knows that the commissioner not only looks at Liberals but Conservatives as well. The commissioner is responsible for each and every member of the House, all 338 of us. I would like to think that all members would listen to and abide by the recommendations and suggestions that the commissioner would bring forward. Would the member agree that there is an obligation on the part of all members, not just a particular member?

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, the commissioner has been extremely busy investigating Liberal ministers and the Liberal Prime Minister. That is just a fact.

*Business of Supply*

To the member's point, this is about integrity. The Prime Minister could have said that had not gone on this illegal holiday, he may have gone to Harrington Lake or to Lake Louise and he would have incurred some costs. He could have asked the House or his officials to come up with what a reasonable cost would have been if he had not gone on a private island holiday. We do not begrudge the Prime Minister taking a holiday. Then the Prime Minister could have said that he would pay the difference. I think all of us would have expected him to have done that proactively. That is actually what a leader and somebody with integrity would do.

If the Prime Minister had said that he needed a holiday with his family, everybody would have agreed. If he said that he needed to have security, we would all have agreed. However, he took an illegal, very costly holiday, only the best for him. He took the most expensive one. He overtly asked for it. He was not even offered that holiday.

If he had told Canadians that he would pay back the additional portion, that would have shown leadership. However, he will not admit anything. He thinks he can get the most expensive holiday, that he can get the very best. He thinks there is one set of rules for everybody around here and another set for him.

• (1035)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to affirm, once again, that the NDP believes there needs to be consequences for members of Parliament who break the law, whether they are the Prime Minister or other members.

I want to return to the question of the scope of today's motion. Yesterday we debated Bill C-50, which has to do with electoral finance reform. I listened to a number of speeches by Conservative members who made a good point. They said that for all the song and dance of a government bill, Bill C-50 kind of tweaked the law, that it did not address a lot of the systemic issues with political financing in Canada. Given the opportunity of being a government bill, a lot more really could have been in it.

I am having similar feelings about the opposition day motion, which references only four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act. Section 16, which is not dealt with in the motion, talks about ministers of the crown not personally soliciting funds from donors if it would put them in a conflict of interest. It is not addressed in today's motion. Section 8 of the act talks about not using insider information for personal gain. These are provisions in the act that if contravened by a member ought to have consequences. Why are those not included in the motion as well?

**Hon. Candice Bergen:** Mr. Speaker, as much as I appreciate my colleague's comments, the NDP has on its opposition days very much honed in to what some could say are specific issues and the party has done that because it feels it is important. Microbeads was an important issue to the NDP and some would have asked why it was not made broader, but that was a political decision the party took.

Definitely, on this side of the House, we have seen the Prime Minister and his caucus defending his refusal to be accountable. Have we taken that issue down to a fine point? Yes, we have. We are hoping that we can all agree on a simple, small point, which is that anybody who breaks the law should pay taxpayers back for those

expenses. If the members agree to that, maybe we will see some follow-through and then we can build on that.

If people cannot be faithful and have integrity in the small things, they cannot on the big things. We see that with the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to the motion put forward by the leader of the official opposition in regard to the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

As people well know, opposition days play an important role in the functioning of this place. There are days when the opposition parties get to choose the issues to be debated in the House of Commons, and on which every member of Parliament will have a vote.

Normally, we expect opposition days to be used to discuss topics that directly affect Canadians, topics like employment and economic growth or maybe proposals that are put forward to help improve the lives of Canadians across the country. I know those are the things on which we are focused on this side of the House. However, the Conservatives have decided that the best use of the day for them is to talk about the Prime Minister. It appears they have still not learned anything from what Canadians told them in 2015.

We do not have any issue with that on this side of the House. While the Conservatives continue to stay focused on us, on the Prime Minister, and on the government, we and the Prime Minister will continue to stay focused on Canadians.

In regard to the report, the opposition knows that the Prime Minister has taken full responsibility. Not only did he do so, but it is important to note that he did so immediately following the release of the former commissioner's report. He walked into the foyer of the House of Commons, just metres from here, and answered numerous questions from members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. That is what Canadians expect of their leaders and that is exactly what the Prime Minister has done.

The Conservatives seem to forget that when they were in power, the media had almost no access to former prime minister Stephen Harper. Unfortunately, it seems their current leader has adopted a similar behaviour to that of his predecessor.

Now, Conservatives will say today, as they did before, that they do not speak to the media because the media is biased against them and that journalists are out to get them. They spent years raising funds on this line of attack against one of the pillars of Canadian democracy. However, on this side of the House, we know that is simply not the case. We know the media has an important job to do.



*Business of Supply*

• (1040)

[Translation]

That is why I am proud that the Prime Minister addressed the contents of the report as soon as it was released. The media were given an opportunity to ask him direct questions, and he answered them. That is what a leader must do. In addition, he did not just answer questions here in Ottawa. He also travelled from one end of the country to the other and answered even more questions from Canadians themselves. Canadians had many questions to ask him on numerous issues, including the economy, immigration, and the environment.

[English]

On top of that, the Prime Minister has been available to answer questions in the House as well. I know some of my colleagues feel that they have heard similar answers from time to time, but that is what happens when the opposition asks the same question over and over.

We respect the House, Parliament, and its officers. However, as just a small comparison, we can look at the number of questions the Prime Minister has answered in the House in his first two years of a majority mandate compared to the previous prime minister. The Prime Minister has answered over 1,400 questions. When former prime minister Stephen Harper was in power, he answered around 900 questions. That is over 50% more than what the Conservatives did in the last Parliament. Therefore, when the Conservatives speak on respect for Parliament, let us not forget where they come from.

However, it is not only a case of respecting Parliament during question period. It is also a question of respecting the institutions of Parliament itself, including its officers. Taking responsibility and committing to working with the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner for all future family vacations is exactly what the Prime Minister has done, and it is what Canadians expect.

To respect the officers of Parliament becomes even more important because of what takes place in Parliament. We all know opposition members have a responsibility to hold the government to account and ensure the government is acting in the best interest of Canadians. Not only do we know this, we welcome it. They do so by asking tough questions, by proposing amendments to legislation, or by voicing their clear opposition to government proposals. However, in the last campaign, Canadians very clearly voted for positive politics, not for the negative politics that the opposition continues to champion.

We have offices like the Office of Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner so they can remain above the fray and make findings free of political interference and of political gain. That is why we thank the former commissioner for her thorough report. As she stated, the report stands for itself, and we agree. That is why the Prime Minister has accepted the findings therein.

[Translation]

I would like to take a moment to thank the former commissioner for her years of service to the House and to Canadians. It has not always been easy for her, as she was the first conflict of interest and ethics commissioner to work under the current Conflict of Interest Act.

She was responsible for setting the standard to be met by the current commissioner and all others who will follow. Although the Conservatives will want above all to remember the report that we are debating in the House today, she conducted many investigations and dedicated herself to improving the institution of the House of Commons. Whether for her first report about Conservative minister Christian Paradis, or her second report about Mr. Paradis, or even her third report about Mr. Paradis, the commissioner has always acted with integrity.

• (1045)

[English]

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner operates above the partisan arguments that happen in places like the House. That is why we listened to the opposition ask for weeks and months for the commissioner to release her report. The opposition even went so far to insinuate that maybe the current commissioner would refuse to continue the investigation, thereby making it imperative that the report be released immediately.

We were also looking forward to the release of this important report. However, how we have reacted to its release could not be more starkly different to the reactions from the opposition. As I have already stated, the Prime Minister accepted the findings, took responsibility, and committed to clearing every family and personal vacation he took with the office of the commissioner moving forward.

When the former commissioner was asked about this, she said that the Conflict of Interest Act, and her report, fulfilled the objectives it was aiming to achieve. We agree. The Prime Minister has also followed the commissioner's recommendations on how to best manage his close relationship with the Aga Khan in the future. That is accountability and that is how Canadians expect their leaders to respond.

However, the opposition seems to be unable or simply refuses to accept the finding and conclusions of the report. That is why we are debating this motion today, instead of keeping our focus where it should be, on Canadians.

The members opposite have often brought up the issue of the Prime Minister's security in regard to his travel. It should not surprise any member of the House that whenever and wherever the Prime Minister travels, there are costs related to the security. This is not the case just for the current Prime Minister. This has also been the case for previous prime ministers. Those needs are not determined politically. They are determined by the security agencies that ensure the safety of the Prime Minister and their advice is followed, and we will continue to do so.

Even the former commissioner has acknowledged that there are security costs related to any travel undertaken by the Prime Minister. There is no surprise that these costs exist, but we will not question the advice of security agencies, and I strongly doubt that Canadians would want us to do so.

However, I understand that the opposition is concerned about the expenditure of public funds. Indeed, we all should be.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

That is why this Prime Minister, when the Liberal Party was the third party in the House, proposed establishing a proactive disclosure system for all members of the House.

I must admit that the Conservatives at least followed our lead. Although it was not what they would have preferred to do, the Conservatives followed our lead every time we increased the degree of transparency for members' expenses.

As for the NDP, it was an entirely different story. While the Liberals and the Conservatives provided detailed reports on their expenditures, the NDP refused to do so for a long time. Furthermore, they pretended to be doing the same thing as the other two parties and tried to convince Canadians that the annual disclosure without details provided by all members of the House was equivalent to the detailed disclosure that we put in place.

[English]

Despite the NDP's opposition to proactive disclosure in the House, it was finally put in place and Canadians now have more information about how their members of Parliament make use of public funds. This change took place thanks to the leadership of one person, and that person is now the Prime Minister. More openness and accountability is what Canadians deserve from their government. That is what we were able to improve when in third place, and that is what we will continue to offer Canadians while in government.

Canadians deserve a government that takes its responsibilities seriously, a government that continuously strives to improve, and a government that cares about issues that are important to Canadians. That is what we do and that is why our plan is working.

As I have said, today, the Conservatives want to talk about the Prime Minister. Let us let them do so. By focusing on Canadians, the Prime Minister has already done things Conservatives were never able to do in 10 years in power.

Last year alone, Canadians created 422,000 jobs. This is the most jobs created in a single year in over a decade. We have the lowest unemployment rate since 1976. Let us think about this. The last time unemployment was as low as it is today, Montreal was hosting the Olympic games. We helped make this happen by investing in Canadians.

The Conservatives and the NDP had proposed cuts so that they could balance the budget no matter the cost. In 2015, we put forward our investment plan and today we have to admit that it is working. It is no wonder that the opposition wants to debate today's motion. What else could they have debated, the economy? They know our economic plan is working for Canadians.

Could they have debated veterans? After years of Conservatives' closing offices, firing front-line staff, and nickel-and-diming veterans, we have reopened offices and veterans today are receiving the services they deserve.

Could they have debated immigration? We are putting an end to Conservative backlogs in our immigration—

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

● (1050)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Order. I just want to remind the hon. members that questions and comments come after the person who is speaking, so that we can name you and you can speak. I do not want to name members when they are not speaking because that would not be very good. It really is not good parliamentary process and it causes some problems for the individual who is screaming or shouting across, as well as everyone else.

I will let the hon. government House leader continue.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, could they debate immigration? We are putting an end to the Conservative backlogs in our immigration system. We are down to 12 months for reuniting families, compared with the 24 months it took under the Conservatives.

[Translation]

That is why we are debating this motion today. The Conservatives have no real reason to find fault with the government. Canadians can continue to offer their criticism, and we are working hard to always try to do better. However, when it comes to the Conservatives, they need to admit that they did not keep our economy moving properly for the decade they were in power. No one will be surprised to learn that we will be voting against this motion. We would have liked to debate important issues, issues that are currently affecting Canadians. However, since the Conservatives would rather talk about the Prime Minister, that is what we are doing.

[English]

I hope we can have a passionate and respectful debate here today.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear the government House leader would rather talk about anything else than the subject of the debate today. I have every confidence that she likely will not answer my question.

However, when it comes to the Prime Minister, his taking an illegal trip and spending taxpayers' money, we are asking him to pay it back. It is clear to me that the health minister, when she disobeyed the rules, paid back the money that she had spent that was not supposed to be spent. Similarly, the minister of indigenous and northern affairs spent money and paid it back, when it was found that it was not in accordance with the rules.

Why, in a government where we have a feminist Prime Minister, do the women have to pay it back but the Prime Minister does not?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, that is a big stretch.

*Business of Supply*

What is clear is that for 10 years the Conservatives pitted the east against the west, and pitted immigrant communities against each other. Today we see the member trying to pit men against women. We are in a time today when we are debating a motion that the opposition has chosen. The former commissioner clearly said that wherever and whenever the Prime Minister travels there are costs related to security.

The member is correct that instead of the motion that the opposition has chosen, I believe we should be debating jobs for Canadians. We should be debating health care to ensure that Canadians get the services they need. We should be debating veterans services, ensuring the hard-fought rights and freedoms they fought for, and ensuring that they are taken care of.

The opposition does not want to debate these issues because it knows our plan is working. We will continue to respond to the very real challenges Canadians are facing. We will continue to listen and be engaged with Canadians. As I have said, the Conservatives will continue to focus on the Prime Minister. The Conservatives will continue to focus on the government. The government and the Prime Minister will continue to focus on Canadians.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know the government House leader likes to say they want to bring the debate back to the concerns of ordinary Canadians. I think ordinary Canadians who are going through their daily lives, who pay their speeding tickets, their student loans, and their taxes, and face consequences from the government when they do not do those things, are concerned to see that the head of our federal government, when he is found to have broken a law, has to face some kind of proportionate consequence. If the consequence is not repaying the whole cost of the trip, I think Canadians, who deal with consequences themselves when they find themselves in trouble with this rule or that rule, would expect the government to say what a reasonable penalty or consequence would be, in light of the fact that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner did find that the Prime Minister broke the law.

Why is it that the government cannot acknowledge that a lot of Canadians think it is right and proper for the Prime Minister to have some kind of penalty assessed for the fact that he broke the conflict of interest law and why do the Liberals not propose some kind of reasonable consequence instead of pretending and deflecting away from the fact that there really is no consequence for the Prime Minister in light of the fact that he broke an important law of the land?

• (1055)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, as I have explained on numerous occasions, within our institutions we have officers of Parliament and when there are concerns raised, officers of Parliament are able to investigate. The opposition members had concerns and they asked the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to investigate. She investigated. She has offered a report. What did the Prime Minister do? He did exactly what Canadians would expect him to do. He accepted responsibility. Right away after the report was tabled, the Prime Minister made himself available to the media to answer those questions that Canadians were posing.

The Prime Minister went a step further. He has travelled the country and made himself available at public town halls. Canadians are talking about issues that impact them. Canadians are talking about jobs of today and jobs for their children. Canadians are talking about student loans and that is exactly why we, in our platform, campaigned to ensure that students would be making a minimum of \$25,000 a year before having to repay.

We engage with Canadians. That is how we created our platform. That is exactly why our plan is working, because we continue to engage and listen to Canadians. That is why I believe that today we could be debating issues that matter to Canadians rather than playing the partisan politics the opposition members choose to play. That is their prerogative. We will continue to focus on Canadians.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I generally agree with the motion being put forward today that people should pay back expenses, but I want to confirm what the government House leader said. I held eight town hall meetings during the January break period. The cumulative total of my constituents who showed up was about 1,000 people and I heard from everyone on questions on everything that concerned them, primarily toxic fish factories, pipelines, climate change, and pensions. I did not get a single question on the Prime Minister's vacation. What I do not like about the motion is the suggestion that anyone in this situation should pay back the cost of security. Those are specific to the Prime Minister.

I had that experience myself when I attended COP 21 in Paris. Because it was two weeks after the terrorist attack, I was told by the RCMP officers that they were assigning two officers to me. I said, "I don't need that. I'm fine." They said it was not my choice and that they were assigning two officers. If I had to, for any reason, pay that back, two officers, two hotel rooms. They were wonderful, by the way, and I am grateful that the RCMP felt I was worth protecting. I disputed the point, but the reality of it is that I do not think those costs should be part of the motion and that is where I differ with my friends in the official opposition. I also think that there are more important issues to debate for a whole day in this place.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that the work the member does is important to this place and I would say that she is worth protecting. When it comes to our security agencies, we need to respect their recommendations. They are the experts in that field and when it comes to officers of Parliament, once again, on this side of the House we have the utmost respect for the work that they do.

I, too, agree that there are very important issues to be debated and discussed. We will continue to make ourselves available to ensure that we are hearing from Canadians. As the member has alluded, there are costs affiliated with the security of the Prime Minister whenever and wherever he travels. We take the recommendations of our security agencies and we always thank them for the good work that they do.

*Business of Supply*

•(1100)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the minister launching the debate on the government side, I want to use my time to register a complaint. The complaint is very simple.

The position of House leader was created during the war because the prime minister had to work with generals in order to facilitate the war effort and could not be in this place. Therefore, a House leader was designated to make sure there was a legislative agenda to roll forward. However, over the past few days we have seen the Prime Minister, during question period, not responding. When an official opposition leader asks a question, the Prime Minister sits down, does not respond, and gives it to his House leader.

When the member for Outremont was the leader of the official opposition in the last Parliament, every day he would question the conduct of a senator in the other place, Mr. Mike Duffy, and every day the previous prime minister would stand in his place and answer uncomfortable questions about the conduct of someone else.

When will the Prime Minister and the House leader agree to start treating this place with respect? She talks about officers of Parliament not being treated well. They are not treating the House with respect when the Prime Minister refuses to answer basic questions about the conduct of his own office.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the confidence that the Prime Minister has in me. I take my job very seriously and I will continue to ensure that all people respect this place. We, on our side, will always do that. We have the utmost respect for this place. Every single day we respect this place. We respect the work that we do and we are proud of it.

As I have said on numerous occasions, the Prime Minister and the government will continue focusing on Canadians. What the member forgot to mention was that former prime minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party focused on Conservatives. They forgot about all Canadians. We focus on all Canadians. That is what we will continue to do. If members opposite want to ask questions that pertain to Canadians, that pertain to the work that is happening in their constituencies, I always welcome those opportunities.

We are taking a whole-of-government approach. The Prime Minister committed to decentralizing the Prime Minister's Office because former prime minister Stephen Harper had shifted that pendulum so far that no decision was made without the prime minister, but we have empowered ministers. Ministers are working on behalf of Canadians. That is why our Minister of Finance has a plan that is working for the economy. That is why our Minister of Veterans Affairs has a plan that is working for veterans. The list goes on. We will continue working for Canadians.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured, as always, to rise in this House to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay and to speak to this very serious issue: the unprecedented situation of a sitting Prime Minister having been found guilty on numerous counts of breaching the Conflict of Interest Act.

I am going to be speaking to the issue of conflict of interest today. I understand why the official opposition brought this motion

forward. I have some problems with it, and I am going to talk about them. However, I find it very frustrating that we have a Prime Minister who shows his contempt for Parliament by not bothering to show up to answer questions. I believe that we are in a dangerous position across the world of moving into post-democratic politics. Our Prime Minister is a great example of that. If he does push-ups in the Bronx, it will make international news. I do not mind that he makes international news, but he does have an obligation to come to the House to answer questions.

We were told at the ethics committee that the Prime Minister should not come to the committee to explain being found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner, because the proper place is in the House of Commons. I agreed with that. That was fair. However, members may have noticed that the Prime Minister showed up when Parliament returned, answered a few questions, and then sat down and refused to answer the leader of the official opposition. That is disrespect for this House. I am not here to take the position of leader of the opposition, but this is about respect for the House.

On the first Wednesday, the Wednesday the Prime Minister told us would be the day he answers all manner of questions, he skipped town to do a television town hall. He had a month and a half to do television town halls, but he skipped Ottawa. To me, this is a serious issue.

On the issue of the Prime Minister being found guilty of breaching the Conflict of Interest Act, the New Democrats differ somewhat from the Conservatives. To me, the fact that he went off to billionaire's island with a family friend showed a major breach of judgment. We are not dealing with a criminal act; we are dealing with a breach of judgment. The question of the judgment of this Prime Minister is his extremely close relationship with the 1%, the insiders.

The government always talks about the middle class and how it is here to do everything for the middle class, but if we look at the growing conflict of interest issues around the Prime Minister, it is about the government's failure to even understand what the middle class is.

I have often said that I think the Prime Minister and I grew up in a different middle class. My father joined the middle class when he was in his forties. He had to quit school as a teenager, as did my mom, to go work. It was not until my dad was in his forties that he was able to go back to school, get an education, and eventually become a professor of economics.

The middle class was built not just through hard work but by a whole social and economic structure that made it possible for kids from working class backgrounds who got an education to move beyond. We are seeing that the notion of the middle class is disappearing year after year with growing levels of student debt and growing precariousness of work.

*Business of Supply*

We have a Prime Minister who decided to go off to billionaire's island to hang out with the Aga Khan, his friend, who is lobbying the Government of Canada. That is a problem. Liberals do not seem to think it is a problem. As the ultimate insider party in the country, they are saying that they are their friends. However, the reason we have laws is so friends who are powerful cannot call up the Prime Minister and make changes. The law should apply to everyone. This Prime Minister does not seem to think it applies to him.

In the case of the breach of the Conflict of Interest Act, he broke it on numerous points. He should have known that it was a conflict of interest to accept a gift from someone that powerful who was lobbying the government. The government's response was very disturbing.

Section 12 of the Conflict of Interest Act, on travel, states:

No minister of the Crown, minister of state or parliamentary secretary, no member of his or her family and no ministerial adviser or ministerial staff shall accept travel on non-commercial chartered or private aircraft for any purpose unless required in his or her capacity as a public office holder or in exceptional circumstances or with the prior approval of the Commissioner.

The Prime Minister decided to go on the Aga Khan's private helicopter to get to his private island. In his defence, the Prime Minister said that there was a difference in the language used in the French act and the English one. The French used the more specific term "*avions*" and not "aircraft". The Prime Minister felt that this specifically exempted helicopters, which was a ridiculous response. It showed not only a lack of judgment but showed someone who would go to the extent of saying that it did not specifically say "helicopters" to find a way to slip through the rules and abuse the act.

• (1105)

I have not agreed with many of Madam Dawson's decisions over the course of many years. However, she said that the Prime Minister's position would be to create a legal absurdity and a complete abuse of the act.

I am going to say quickly that I have a problem with the Conservative motion to pay back travel, because when the Prime Minister travels, there are enormous costs. There are issues of security if a prime minister wants to take a vacation anywhere. When Stephen Harper went to see a Boston Red Sox game, there was an enormous cost to the taxpayer. However, the Prime Minister does not get to travel on public aircraft. If the Prime Minister is going anywhere, there are going to be costs. We accepted it for Stephen Harper. People were asking how much money was spent for him to go to a ball game. He was the prime minister. He was not able to take cheap WestJet flights. There were going to be costs.

Therefore, I have a question about the propriety of the House ordering the Prime Minister to pay it back for his bad judgment.

That being said, the problem with our Conflict of Interest Act is that the commissioner does not have the power or ability to render the appropriate penalty. Should the Prime Minister pay a penalty from his personal money for this abuse of the act? Certainly. I think it behooves us within this House to say that we need to overhaul the Conflict of Interest Act to make sure that we do not have sitting prime ministers or cabinet ministers abusing the act and that the commissioner has the power to levy financial fines to force

compliance, because if the Prime Minister believes he is above the law, it sends a very disturbing message to his cabinet.

On the issue of overall conflict of interest and the Prime Minister, I am seeing a disturbing pattern emerging. It emerged right after the election. I was so impressed with his talk during the campaign of creating a new, open, and transparent notion of parliamentary accountability. He seemed to follow through with his letters of commission to each of his ministers that talked about the need to have a higher standard. It was not just about the legal obligation but about being seen meeting that legal obligation. I was thinking that here was a Prime Minister who would be willing to do stuff differently, and for a moment, the sun was shining on accountability in Ottawa, but then our Prime Minister decided to go for cash for access.

To me, it is the most grotty thing possible for a sitting prime minister to make himself available to be lobbied for cash. He said that they were not lobbying. Who would pay \$1,500 a pop to sit at a private CEO's condo if not to get the ear of the Prime Minister? Was it because they thought he was a funny guy and just wanted to hang out with him?

Chinese billionaires met with the Prime Minister. When he was confronted, the Prime Minister said that they were talking about the middle class. I guess I grew up in a different middle class. Can members imagine for a minute that Chinese billionaires came over to Canada, paid \$1,500 a pop to talk to the Prime Minister at a private function, and were worried about folks who are just getting by? I do not think so. The idea that the Prime Minister would use his office to collect those funds for the Liberal Party to me set a disturbing pattern, and it is a pattern that has been repeated.

We saw the issue of the KPMG fraud scheme. KPMG, which has received millions of dollars in federal contracts, set up a scheme so that powerful Canadians did not have to pay their share.

I think of a single mom I dealt with in my riding over Christmas who was not able to pay for her kids' Christmas presents, because every year, CRA cuts her off, because it claims that she has to prove once again that she actually has children. We were calling and calling. There was a seven-week period CRA had to go through, because it had to do due diligence, as it has done three times in three years, to prove that this single mother actually has children, and she was not able to buy Christmas presents. We see the CRA's willingness to go after any ordinary Canadian who owes it money. It shows no mercy. However, when the rich insiders who were caught in the KPMG scandal were found out, CRA offered them immediate amnesty. That is not standing up for the middle class. That is standing up for the 1%.

• (1110)

What did the Prime Minister do after this scandal? He appointed a senior KPMG representative to be the treasurer of Liberal Party finances. To me, that sends a very disturbing message. It shows contempt for taxpayers who work hard and pay their bills. The Prime Minister looked at that KPMG scandal and said, "This is a great guy. I like how these guys are operating. Let us get them to handle Liberal Party finances." That is a very disturbing tone.

*Business of Supply*

We saw it repeated for Samuel Bronfman, who is the good, close friend of the Prime Minister and a key Liberal fundraiser. Mr. Bronfman was named in the paradise papers, an international scandal in terms of the uber rich not paying their share while they turn around and tell Canadians that they do not have services.

We can make comparisons to understand how this plays out. This past week, the Prime Minister looked a Princess Patricia's veteran in the face, Brock Blaszczyk, a man who lost his leg serving his country, and told him that veterans are asking for more than what the government is willing to give. These are people who were willing to give their lives and their health in service to the nation who came back and have been ripped off on their basic pensions. The Prime Minister can look a veteran in the eye and say that he is asking for more than Canada is willing to give.

The Prime Minister's personal friend, Samuel Bronfman, was then named in the paradise papers for a business scheme he had been involved in. The Prime Minister said that there was absolutely no issue, because the Liberals had been assured that Samuel Bronfman followed all the rules. It is completely inappropriate for a sitting prime minister to interpose himself in a question of a tax case, or potential tax fraud, and tell Canadians that there is nothing to be seen here. Why? It is because Samuel Bronfman is not only a personal friend but raised \$250,000 in two hours for the Liberal Party. He is a very powerful person.

We brought in the Accountability Act when the last Liberal government fell to try to close these kinds of loopholes so that powerful insiders who raise money for the party and hang out with the Prime Minister on billionaire's island do not get this kind of access. This brings us back to the Aga Khan. The Aga Khan was lobbying the government for money, and the Prime Minister received a gift. The Liberal Party does not seem to understand that there is a problem with that.

We will go to the next issue. There is a very disturbing pattern of conflict of interest emerging in a government that says it is there for the little guy and the middle class, but time and again, it is looking after the uber rich.

We can talk about the privatized pension king of Canada, who is the finance minister. He is a man who told investors about the enormous opportunities in getting rid of defined pension plans, a man whose company was involved in the largest pension meltdowns in Canadian history: Nortel, Stelco, and now the Sears pension windup. We have a finance minister who is unwilling to do anything to end this kind of corporate pension theft. Well, it would certainly affect the bottom line of his family business.

He brought in pension legislation. In fact, the very first thing he did was bring in pension legislation, and that legislation, Bill C-27, will make it easier to go after other defined pension plans. However, the Prime Minister did not think there was a potential conflict of interest.

Again, I guess the Prime Minister and I grew up in a different middle class. The people I know, who save so hard to get a basic pension, see what is happening to the Sears workers and say, "That could be me."

Younger people, who see that they will never have a pension, are asking where this government is in dealing with the pension crisis. Well, the government is making sure that the privatized pension king of Canada, who is the finance minister, who is driving the agenda on pensions, is not going to be in a position to be pulled from the file. The government is going to do nothing to help Sears workers, and it is continuing to push ahead with Bill C-27, which is a direct attack on defined pensions.

• (1115)

Over the years in Parliament, I have seen many politicians telling Canadians that they are going to give them a better deal. Sometimes it is like the crocodile saying, "Trust me. Let's go on a picnic down by the riverside. I have your best interest at heart". However, when one puts in the Samuel Bronfmans, the top people from KPMG, and the privatized pension king in this country to deal with the issue of pensions, one cannot be saying that one has Canadians' interests at heart.

This goes back to the importance of the motion to have the Prime Minister found guilty of using his position in getting a benefit from a billionaire to vacation on a billionaire's island. Again, I will not say that this is an illegal act. To me, this was an astounding lack of judgment. It is within the purview of Parliament to insist that the Prime Minister meet a level of accountability, which he has not done because he has left Parliament and he has not answered these questions.

However, to be clear, I have a problem with the Conservatives' argument that he should pay back the cost of the trip, because wherever the Prime Minister goes, there will be enormous costs associated with the issue of security. However, there does need to be the ability under the ethics act to deal with financial monetary penalties for the abuse of office, and for the failure to live up to the standard. The Prime Minister has set the bar very low for the rest of his cabinet. We need to be working across party lines to ensure that these loopholes in the Conflict of Interest Act are shut down and that the Prime Minister is held accountable so that he can restore the trust of Canadians on this fundamental issue.

On the overall issue of conflict of interest, as New Democrats we will continue to hold the government to account. We are not afraid to congratulate it if we believe it is doing something good. We do not have to be oppositional on everything. However, to see the government time and time again favour the interests of the 1% and the insiders while paying lip service to people who are falling behind is simply not acceptable.

We will continue to address these issues and the need to deal with the toxic nature of big money's influence in political life, which is as important now as it was when we had to bring in the Federal Accountability Act back in 2006. I remember at that time we had the corrupt Liberal government up on charges. We had such abuse with lobbyists and insiders. The line back then was "It's who you know in the PMO".

*Business of Supply*

This struck Canadians as fundamentally wrong, because most Canadians never get the opportunity to call in. Most Canadians never get their cases fixed, except when they go through the system, and that is the way it is supposed to be for the lobbyists and the insiders. There has to be a system. It has to be accountable. It has to be transparent so that the people know why and how decisions are being made. However, with the current government, there is too much of a slip back to the bad old days of insiders and friends.

This is an instructive motion. Hopefully, the Prime Minister will listen to it, and I think the Prime Minister does need to tell Canadians that he will make some manner of restitution to show that he understands the seriousness of having been found guilty on numerous counts of breaching the Conflict of Interest Act.

• (1120)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am somewhat disappointed with regard to the manner in which the member across the way tries to give what I believe is a false impression. I believe that the government and particularly the Prime Minister has done an exceptional job in terms of reaching out to everyday Canadians. I challenge the member to tell me when a previous prime minister has gone across the country and had town halls with thousands of Canadians being engaged in a very real and tangible way.

My friend across the way says that we are giving support to the elite of society and that we have a Prime Minister who likes to cozy up to the 1%. However, we, as a government, brought in a tax on Canada's 1%. The member will recall that the NDP actually voted against the tax increase on Canada's 1%. There are so many things the member across the way said that are just stretching the truth.

Would the member not acknowledge that in fact this is an issue that the Prime Minister has taken very seriously and has responded very favourably to, and that it is time that we go back to focusing on what is important to Canadians, which is our economy, the middle class, creating jobs, and protecting our health care? These are the priorities of Canadians. Would the member not agree?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I was fascinated by my colleague's suggestion about town halls, because they are really important. The Prime Minister relegates questions of health care and veterans to public town halls where he controls the mike, but billionaire insiders pay him \$1,500 and they get to whisper in his ear.

How about we flip cash for access and hold televised public town halls with all the lobbyists so that we can see the people who are trying to influence the government? Then we could have the Prime Minister actually invite people like Mr. Blaszczyk, who lost his leg in Afghanistan and is being told, "Sorry, we don't have any money for you. You're asking too much". That might be a bit more accountable.

I am not saying this in a negative manner toward the town halls. I have been very impressed with the Prime Minister's outreach with town halls, but the issue is that on the first day he was supposed to be here to answer questions in Parliament, he skipped Parliament to do a televised town hall, which can be much more an area of theatre and control for the Prime Minister. His obligation is to be here in the House, to be speaking and responding to questions, because that is

how our parliamentary system exists. Our Prime Minister shows a contempt for this system if he is going to ignore this. He has not answered these questions. He deserves to answer these questions.

As for his cozying up to the 1%, when the Liberals did their so-called tax break for the middle class, if people made \$23 an hour or less, they got zero, but if they made \$50 to \$100 an hour they got top bang for their buck. I guess his idea of the middle class is bankers and cabinet ministers.

• (1125)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Before we go to questions and comments, I just want to remind hon. members that we are not to refer to the presence or absence of members in the House, whether it is today or in the past. I just wanted to bring that up as a reminder.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague's comments, especially with regard to the disturbing pattern of behaviour we are seeing with the government and the Prime Minister, from the broken promises, through the cash for access corruption, and now indeed to all these ethics violations. It seems to me that there are not, today, adequate consequences.

We saw that when the finance minister forgot about his villa in France he got charged only \$200 for that violation, and he is an extremely wealthy man. Here, we see the Prime Minister being found guilty of breaking four laws with absolutely no consequences.

While I can entertain the member's suggestion that perhaps the security costs would have happened anyway, would he not agree that in the same way the health minister did not have to pay the total cost of the limousines, just the value of what a reasonable expense would have been, this is a similar case? The Conflict of Interest Act does talk about remunerating for the value of what was received. In this case it was a private vacation on an extremely expensive billionaire's island.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, yes, the health minister was found to have charged up extraordinary fees on limos. There was Bev Oda, who was a notorious abuser of limos, travelling around, and in the end it cost her her career because it was so damaging. People asked how she could justify this abuse of funds. These issues are serious and people do need to be accountable.

My one concern with the Prime Minister is that, no matter where he travels, it will cost. If he goes on vacation or if he goes to a ball game, it will generate an enormous cost to the taxpayers. In the Prime Minister's case, I would prefer some other manner to do this. That goes back to the issue that we need monetary penalties that could be applied, based on the severity of the action. In the case of the Prime Minister, we are not dealing with a criminal act here, but we are dealing with a serious case of bad judgment and a Prime Minister sending a very bad message. With the Prime Minister being found guilty of four abuses of the Conflict of Interest Act, the fact that there are no consequences strikes me as very problematic in Canada. We need to look at this and there needs to be appropriate penalties.

*Business of Supply*

I understand, and we will be supporting the motion, but in future, I would prefer the Prime Minister's travel to be considered a separate issue, even from other parliamentarians, because of his inability to get better deals on WestJet flights. However, there is an obligation to deal with monetary penalties and we have not done that in Parliament. This is a good opportunity to set a path going forward.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one of the important points my colleague has been making is the importance of having some kind of consequence, and particularly the ability to assess some kind of financial penalty on members of the government who break the Conflict of Interest Act.

I am just wondering if the member wants to highlight for us what that would mean in terms of some of the other conflicts of interest for government. I am thinking, in particular, of the questions surrounding the finance minister and Bill C-27, and also the earlier point that the motion, as written, would not really allow for any obvious penalty to be assessed against the finance minister if he were found definitely to be in a conflict of interest.

How would the approach suggested by my colleague encompass those kinds of cases in addition to the case of the Prime Minister?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, this is the larger issue of ethics and accountability, the need for clear rules that apply to everyone. Certainly, when the Prime Minister is found guilty, there is going to be an extra burden on the Prime Minister because there is an extra level of breach of the public trust.

When we do these one-off opposition day motions, the problem is that we are dealing with just the Prime Minister, not the larger issue that we have, using the old sexist language, of the gentleman's code that has always operated in Parliament. It is based on the assumption that people are going to abide by the rules. Also, as we saw in the Senate, people look out for each other and breaches are not considered all that problematic because of the club we are in.

Breaches are problematic. Breaches are particularly problematic when it is about the ability of powerful corporate interests to make those calls into the Prime Minister's Office to get things fixed or get things changed. We need to have clear rules of transparency, in terms of who was lobbying and how they were lobbying, and in terms of the gifts that are considered appropriate and not appropriate. The Prime Minister clearly breached those.

We need the ability to administer monetary penalties for the abuse of public trust by officials who will be using their position, their powerful position, to further interests of friends, lobbyists, and party members.

Out of this conversation in the House today should be the beginning of a larger discussion on the need to reform the Conflict of Interest Act to make sure that it applies to everyone in varying degrees, so that the backbenchers have one standard, there is a higher standard for parliamentary secretaries, a much higher standard for ministers of cabinet, and the highest standard has to be for the Prime Minister of this country. We have to be able to put our trust, regardless of partisan lines, in the integrity of the Prime Minister.

• (1130)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Milton.

I am pleased to speak to the opposition motion. Perhaps members of the House are aware that I have an engineering background, but what they may not be aware of is that every professional engineer in this country has to take an ethics and law exam in order to get their professional licence. We receive a book and we study, and become well versed in ethics, in conflict of interest, and in a number of other issues like that. It is important for engineers to have this background in ethics and to clearly understand conflict of interest because public safety depends on them. Public trust is important.

I would argue that even though understanding ethics and conflict of interest is important in engineering, it is even more important here in the House of Commons. It is important that the Prime Minister, who holds the highest position in the country, have a high standard of ethics and integrity and an understanding of conflict of interest so that public safety is protected and so the public can have trust in him.

The Prime Minister began his campaign by suggesting that the bar was going to be higher. He said that he would be open and transparent. He said the mandate letters to his ministers would call on them to have a higher standard of behaviour so they would avoid even the perception of a conflict of interest. He raised Canadians' expectations and they expected him to do what he said he was going to do.

Unfortunately, the bad behaviour started with broken promises. The Prime Minister said a Liberal government would only spend a deficit of \$10 billion. That went out the window. He said a Liberal government would balance the budget within its mandate. Maybe not. He said a Liberal government would restore home mail delivery. No. He said it would be the last election under first past the post. No.

With his constant breaking of promises, Canadians started to question whether they could trust the Prime Minister. That is a difficulty. If an organization is rotten at the top, the rot will work its way through the organization like a cancer. That is what we started to see, from the time the Prime Minister started to do the cash for access fundraisers where billionaires were paying money to him and then receiving deals, such as \$1 billion for health care in B.C. or the Trudeau Foundation getting lots of money in exchange for discussions about affairs and business in the government.

That behaviour began to work its way to Liberal ministers. The finance minister started to do the cash for access thing. People would pay \$500. One of them became head of the Halifax port authority. We saw it happen with the justice minister and cash for access fundraisers with lawyers that were doing business with the government. This is forbidden under the Conflict of Interest Act. The rot began to spread. We saw violations of expenses by the health minister and the minister of indigenous and northern affairs. All of these things began to erode the confidence that people had in the Prime Minister and in our ability to trust him.



*Business of Supply*

Then we get to the trip to billionaire island. When I first heard that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and a number of members of the Liberal Party had gone to this private island for a vacation, in less than five seconds I knew that they had violated the Conflict of Interest Act.

Members of Parliament receive training with respect to the Conflict of Interest Act as soon as they are elected. I knew immediately that they had violated the act. We are not allowed to accept travel of a value more than \$200. To stay at a private island for a week is worth more than \$200. Immediately I knew that was bad. Then the Aga Khan Foundation received millions of dollars from the government for its work over time. The foundation lobbies for money. It is clear in the act that members cannot receive anything from a lobbyist because we do not want to create the perception of undue influence.

• (1135)

The Prime Minister said that the Aga Khan was a close personal family friend, but the Ethics Commissioner, in her report, was clear. She said that the Prime Minister had not seen the Aga Khan in 30 years, until such time as the Prime Minister became the head of the Liberal Party and subsequently Prime Minister. Why then would the Aga Khan want to take up this relationship with the head of the Liberal Party, and subsequently the Prime Minister, when his foundation receives millions of dollars from him? I think we can easily see why he might want to do that, but it does not mean he is a close family friend.

Talking about the vacation on the island, my other question is about the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Nobody seems to be talking about this, but in that same first five seconds I thought that if it is wrong for the Prime Minister to accept travel of more than \$200, it must also be wrong for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. However, nobody has even begun to talk about that part of the problem.

When someone is caught doing something that is not right, the person needs to own up to it. We listened for a whole year to the Prime Minister and the government House leader claiming that the Prime Minister abided by all of the ethics rules and the acts and there was nothing wrong at all. It was not until all of this came to light and the report was finally issued—I have no idea why it took a whole year—that it was clear he was guilty on four counts of violating the act. He is the first prime minister to break a federal law. Instead of owning up and making up, the Prime Minister apologized and said that we should move on. That is not the way things work.

When the health minister took limousines, she had to pay the money back because it was not an eligible expense. She went against what was allowed to be charged. It was the same for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. If the women in his government do not follow the rules and have to pay money back, I do not understand why the Prime Minister thinks the rules do not apply to him and he does not have to pay money back. Is it that the women have one standard and the men have another, or is it that his whole cabinet has a certain standard and he has a different set of rules that he thinks applies to him?

I find that part of it very troubling, because at the end of the day, there is absolutely no consequence to the Prime Minister for what he has done. However, there is a consequence to taxpayers, because

over \$200,000 was spent on this billionaire island vacation. If part of the \$200,000 was spent on security, I accept the argument that has been made that the security of the government goes wherever the Prime Minister goes, but that does not encompass the whole cost. If we think about the equivalent value for the Prime Minister, his family, Liberal Party members, and the Minister of Veterans Affairs to vacation for that week, that is a lot of money. It is certainly a lot more than a \$200 fine that the finance minister got. Canadians' trust in the Prime Minister will not be restored until he shows that he is willing to take responsibility for what he did. He broke the law and he needs to do as his other ministers did, which is to pay the money back.

Leadership starts at the top. It is very important that the Prime Minister hold his whole government to account, that all Liberals obey the rules, that they all stop this cash for access nonsense, and that they all understand what ethics are. If they need to be trained, I would be very happy to lend them the book I had to read when I first became an engineer in order to understand ethics and conflict of interest, or they could simply read the guidelines that are clearly available to the government that talk about the fact that members cannot accept travel or any gift of more than \$200 and they are not allowed to receive anything from lobbyists.

I would encourage the government to come clean with Canadians, make amends for the wrong that was done, and try to restore the public's trust in the Prime Minister, who, as I said, is the highest office in the land. If it is not pure at the top, it will not be pure at the bottom.

• (1140)

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

Mr. Speaker, it is important to repeat to members of the House that this is not the first time the Ethics Commissioner has said there was a mistake made. Those members try to give the impression that it is just the Liberal Party that is affected, but the Conservative human resources minister also had a finding on her. She currently sits in the House. There are other Conservatives and New Democrats who are no doubt under review by the commissioner.

Sometimes mistakes happen. What is important is that when a mistake happens, it is acknowledged. We have seen the Prime Minister make that acknowledgement. We have gone beyond that. We are now focusing on what Canadians want us to focus on. We know because we have a Prime Minister who has been touring the country, having town halls, meeting with Canadians, getting a better understanding of what Canadians want, the importance of the economy, jobs, our health care system, and so much more.

*Business of Supply*

The commissioner has made a ruling and we have accepted the ruling. The Conservatives seem to want to see more take place on this, yet we are complying with the commissioner. We are working with the commissioner and we are even going beyond the commissioner. Why do the Conservatives want to continue to focus on this issue when there are so many other important issues that Canadians want the House to debate?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, certainly there are other members who have violated the Conflict of Interest Act over time. Examples were given earlier today of members who, when the rules changed on what was allowed to be mailed out, were not aware of the changes and mailed things outside their ridings and actually had to pay those costs back. We heard about someone who accepted tickets to an Elton John concert and then had to pay the money back.

The point is not that other members have not contravened the act. The point is that everyone else is expected to pay back the money that was an ineligible expense. That is all we are doing here. We are trying to get the Prime Minister to have the same set of rules that apply to everyone else apply to him. I take particular offence that the Liberal government every time we ask questions about this, divert and talk about everything else under the sun. I understand why the Liberals do not want to talk about this, but Canadians deserve an answer. The Prime Minister needs to be held accountable.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks, and particularly for the indignation she expressed with regard to the situation both on behalf of herself and the people she represents. I must admit that I share her indignation over the subject we are debating this morning.

I am just an ordinary MP, but even if someone were to offer me something like a pair of tickets to see a show or a hockey game, alarm bells would go off in my head. I would wonder whether it was acceptable for me to accept the tickets. We have here a far more serious case involving an individual who holds a much more senior position than I do, and alarm bells should have gone off in his head as well. For ordinary people, taking responsibility for their actions is not just about standing in front of a microphone looking contrite and saying "I take responsibility". There must be consequences, and restitution must be made.

My question is this: does the punishment called for in this morning's motion fit the crime, which is being described by the commissioner as a mistake? Should we not undertake a comprehensive review and reform of the system so that, when such situations arise, other measures can be imposed in addition to monetary penalties? Examples of such measures could include the loss of the right to speak or vote for a certain period.

Should we review and reform the entire system?

● (1145)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Clearly, everyone knows the rules. I think the rules are very good and people who break them need to pay. The Prime Minister has to pay back the money that he wasted on his vacation.

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very deep and authentic relationship and connection with the rule of law. I enforced laws when I was the harbour master of the Toronto port authority. I interpreted laws when I was a lawyer. I have drafted laws as a minister and member of Parliament.

I believe that laws are living documents, and they have to be looked at and changed and updated where the conditions warrant. The motion today seeks to address a shortcoming in the current rules that we face here in the House. It is worth noting that it has to do with two separate acts, the Conflict of Interest Act, regarding the accepting of gifts and hospitality, or furthering private interests, or being in a conflict of interest in accepting travel, or the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, which as members know, is appendix I to the Standing Orders of this House.

What this motion seeks to redress is a curious situation that we find ourselves in at the moment. It is worth a trip down memory lane to remind us of how we got here. As the House knows, we have had an unprecedented set of findings and facts in the last number of weeks. The Ethics Commissioner investigated a trip that the Prime Minister took in December 2016, along with another member of Parliament. Why I bring up this other member of Parliament will be apparent at the end of my remarks.

The Ethics Commissioner interviewed the Prime Minister twice, in April and in October. She received representations from counsel to the Prime Minister about why he felt he had not violated the act associated with the conflict of interest in his duty as a public office holder, or the code of conduct in his duty as a member of Parliament. She interviewed witnesses as well. She reviewed past findings. She drew up a set of facts which she then distributed to the Prime Minister in order for him to agree with the facts or set the facts correct if they were incorrect. As well, at the end of the day, she made conclusions and she put it forth in a report.

The Ethics Commissioner made five key findings in her report. The first was that the Aga Khan did not meet the definition of a friend, and she believed that the Prime Minister defining a friendship with him was misleading. Second, the Prime Minister breached the act when his family travelled on a non-commercial aircraft chartered by the Aga Khan in March 2016, and as well in December 2016. Third, she found that the Prime Minister failed to arrange his affairs in a way that would prevent him from being placed into a conflict. Fourth, she found that when there were future discussions surrounding federal government grants to the Prime Minister's self-defined friend, he refused to recuse himself from the conversation.

Finally, and the point which I am going to be focusing on today, was the finding that the Prime Minister broke rules when he accepted these gifts. This is exactly what the motion is aimed to redress, an updating of the rules given the set of circumstances.

As I mentioned, I have been in a drafter position. I have been an enforcer, and I have been an interpreter of laws. One thing I know is that when there is a very clear process, which we have, but more importantly a very clear penalty and deterrent, it is very effective in ensuring that rules and laws are followed.

*Business of Supply*

We know the Prime Minister values the ethics code, and we know that he values the Conflict of Interest Act. In his own words, he has indicated it is not enough to merely abide by them in law, but that we should abide by them in spirit as well.

We find ourselves in the situation, in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Act, where the Prime Minister is the adjudicator of what the penalty will be. How does that happen? People may ask how that is possible.

As I mentioned, there are two pieces of legislation. One is the Conflict of Interest Act, and one is the code of conduct. In both cases, there are consequences for breaches by the Prime Minister. The one that Prime Minister was found to be in breach of was the Conflict of Interest Act for public office holders. In the act, sections 44 and 45 are the parts that deal with the conflict of interest and what happens at the end of the report. As I described already, the Ethics Commissioner has powers to summon witnesses, to interview, to draft findings, and then gives the report to the Prime Minister, to the person who is alleged to have broken the rules, and to the public.

• (1150)

Obviously there is a reason that it goes to the Prime Minister. One could surmise, in drafting this legislation, that the reason is that the Prime Minister has the control and power to appoint or not appoint public office holders. He has the control and power to determine who is going to be a minister and who is not. As such, handing over a report with a finding of fact and conclusion that indicates a minister or public office holder has breached the Conflict of Interest Act means something, because in the hands of the Prime Minister is the ability to punish for the breach.

However, here we have a situation where the Prime Minister is receiving a report about himself. I do not think the drafters assumed that the first person to breach these parts of the act would be the Prime Minister of Canada. One curious measure that seems to have been forgotten is that there are sections of the act where one can receive an administrative penalty, but they are clearly defined. It is very clear that these two parts of the act have not been included. The reasons are that the people who came before us probably thought that putting it in the hands of the Prime Minister would be best. As a result, there is no penalty for a breach of this part of the act.

What we seek is to provide a framework, so that if the breach of the act ends up with taxpayers footing the bill for something tangential to the receipt of this gift illegally, then they do not have to pay for it. That makes absolute sense. It is something, as lawmakers, that we should consider. We need to have a framework. It is incredibly important.

At the end of the day, this motion is about responsibility, accountability, and integrity. It is about the integrity of every member in this place. Let us be very clear. What we are talking about today is implementing one rule to govern us all. Remember what I said. In this set of circumstances, it is the Prime Minister who will always have the ability to adjudicate and determine the appropriate level of punishment for breach of the Conflict of Interest Act for the receipt of gifts. It is he who decides what will happen. In this case, he decided that an apology was sufficient. We disagree on this side of the House. Apologies are not sufficient, especially when we know that this trip cost at least \$200,000.

There is one other matter I would like to bring up. If the other side wants to tell me they are working with the Ethics Commissioner on recommendations, they are doing an absolutely terrible job. In both the Conflict of Interest Act and the code of conduct, it is very clear that gifts must be reported, registered in the public registry, and notice given to the Ethics Commissioner. As I researched last evening, I discovered that the current Minister of Veterans Affairs has not reported this trip, either as a gift, which the Ethics Commissioner has indicated is the case, or as sponsored travel. There is no excuse for not updating this public registry. There is no reason that this did not happen, except there is one rule for these guys and one rule for the rest of us.

As well, the Prime Minister has not updated his public registry to include the fact that he received a gift. Now, we had to wait a year for the Ethics Commissioner to determine it was a gift, because he said it was a friend. However, it does not matter if it is a friend or not; it is a gift. He has abdicated his responsibility, again, to update the registry, so who is going to punish him for that? Who is going to have the last say on whether they are going to uphold it? This is a farce. The Liberals say that they care about ethics, transparency, and accountability. Given the first opportunity, not only does the Prime Minister breach this act knowingly and in full contemplation of the problems associated with it, but he decides there is no punishment. Then he scoffs the regulations by not even doing the simple motion of filling out a piece of paper and sending it to the Ethics Commissioner, so all Canadians know on the public registry who is taking gifts from lobbyists and who is not. That is a shame, and it should be corrected today.

• (1155)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we can see, the Conservatives have focused on the Prime Minister. Virtually since day one, they have had a very strong negative attitude. Whatever opportunity they get, they will take shots at the sitting Prime Minister. It does not matter what he does.

Canadians have more confidence and faith in the independent Office of the Ethics Commissioner. We should look at what Mary Dawson said. She is not affiliated with a political party. It is important for us to recognize that the Prime Minister met with the commissioner and worked in full co-operation with her. When the commissioner's report came out, there was a positive response from the Prime Minister. Since then, he has toured the country and held town halls, meeting with thousands of Canadians, providing the opportunity to have that engagement. What is important to recognize is that we are in compliance and working with the commissioner's office to ensure that this sort of thing does not take place in the future. The Prime Minister will do such things, before he takes his holidays in the future, as sharing that information with the commissioner.

I am wondering why, and maybe the member across the way could explain, the Conservatives do not have that sense of confidence and trust in the commissioner's office and the findings the commissioner has made. Why do they want to continue going down this road when what we should be looking at is what is important to Canadians? This is what we have been hearing time and time again.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have decided that they are going to say we are picking on the poor Prime Minister. When I mentioned that he has not had the decency to update his own registry on public disclosure, declaration of gifts or other advantages, let me tell members some of what he declared. Obviously he knows that there is a process, but he has not done it, which speaks to me of the fact that the Liberals do not care about the Conflict of Interest Act and the code of conduct. He received a Huawei Mate10 Pro android phone from His Excellency Li Keqiang, the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. He received a Karalux 24 karat gold-plated vase, this time from the chairman of Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee. He also received a framed felting piece entitled *See You in the Future*, by artist Tonya Corkey in Toronto. He also received a gourmet gift chest from Baskits, Ottawa.

Those are all very interesting. However, here is the point. Where is the free helicopter ride? Where are the free accommodations? Where is anything in here regarding the Aga Khan? When we google it or do the search on the registry, it is not there.

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is more of a comment than a question. I heard the member opposite reference her time at the Toronto port authority and having an ethical conduct and review of law experience at that institution. I remind the member opposite that when she was there, no annual general meetings were held as required by the legislation, and a flight manifest for the MFP inquiry disappeared. We did not know how one of the largest corruption scandals in the history of the City of Toronto went down because it did not keep the records. I would also remind her that while she was a candidate for Parliament, she used government offices to fax out her fundraising requests.

I would also remind the member opposite that one member of the cabinet's fundraising chief and another member's effective campaign manager were appointed to the board. While both of these folks were kicking back salaries that they earned from the port authority to the Conservative Party, an issue I raised in the previous Parliament, the member opposite sat completely silent. If she is going to school us on ethics, she might want to review her behaviour at the Toronto port authority and understand that was unethical as well.

• (1200)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Mr. Speaker, welcome to a disagreement that has been going on for at least the 15 years we have had in the House of Commons.

First, with respect to annual general meetings, I invite the hon. member to take a look at the records of the Toronto port authority, wherein he will discover that, by law, an annual general meeting was held every year.

Second, with respect to my ethics reviews, yes, I have had a number of Ethics Commissioner investigations. However, I was not found to have been in breach. That was the Prime Minister.

Third, on the topic of appointments to boards, the member is not going to stand here in this House and dare to tell us that no Liberals are being appointed to any of these boards.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for St. Catharines.

It is always an honour and a privilege for me to rise in the House to tell Canadians about the remarkable work being done by our government under the leadership of our right hon. Prime Minister. That same Prime Minister took responsibility for his actions and accepted the findings of the former commissioner as soon as her report was released.

Our government respects the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the work of all officers of Parliament. Canadians expect all members to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, which is what the Prime Minister did. Immediately after the commissioner's report was released, the Prime Minister accepted the findings and took responsibility.

That is exactly what Canadians expect: a sense of responsibility and transparency that shows that we trust Canadians and we respect the work of officers of Parliament. Our trust in Canadians is precisely why they in turn trust us to put in place our economic plan to support the middle class and those working hard to join it.

This plan is working. Because Canadians trust us and are working hard, 422,000 jobs were created in 2017. This is the largest number of jobs created in a single year in more than a decade. The last time we saw such numbers was under another Liberal government. However, we would never have been able to do this without the trust of Canadians. They can have confidence in us and our democratic institutions thanks to the work of our officers of Parliament, like the former commissioner. We thank her for her work.

We will continue to work with the new commissioner. With respect to the Prime Minister's family and personal vacations, the commissioner will ensure that such trips are cleared by the commissioner's office. We are also determined to continue ensuring that officers of Parliament get the support they need and remain independent.

The motion moved by my colleague in the opposition addresses, in my opinion, an important notion that my Conservative colleagues too often ignored when they were in power: the Canadian taxpayer. As we all know, all prime ministers incur security costs. The security agencies are the ones that determine what is needed to keep the Prime Minister safe, and their recommendations are followed. The former commissioner herself acknowledged that costs are always incurred when the Prime Minister travels.

On the topic of using taxpayer dollars, the Conservatives should be a little more humble. We all remember the television ads that the Conservatives bought with public funds to announce programs that did not even exist yet, and the billboards that got as much attention from the Conservatives as the construction projects themselves.

*Business of Supply*

Our government is listening and is acting in the best interests of taxpayers and all Canadians. This is reflected in all the policies we have brought forward over the past two years. As soon as we took office, we clearly said that the economy needs to work for the middle class and those working hard to join it. This is and always has been a must, on this side of the House.

First, we introduced a middle-class tax cut, which continues to benefit nearly nine million Canadians. Then we introduced the Canada child benefit, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. As a reminder, the Canada child benefit is a tax-free monthly payment to eligible families to help support their children under 18 years of age. Families can then use this extra money to enroll their children in day camp, put food on the table, or buy warm winter clothing. That is called working for the future and helping taxpayers. By contrast, the Conservatives paid benefits to the children of millionaires.

Moving right along, we also announced the government's historical agreement with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan. At maturity, it will increase the maximum retirement benefit by about 50%.

•(1205)

In current dollars, this represents an increase of almost \$7,000 for a maximum benefit of approximately \$20,000. With similar improvements made by the Quebec government to the Quebec pension plan, Canadians across the country can now aspire to a more dignified and secure retirement. These are just a few simple examples of the investments we have made for the benefit of the middle class and all taxpayers.

Of course, my colleagues opposite would rather ignore those results and the commissioner's findings. Indeed, the opposition has been asking for weeks and months that the report be tabled. Now that this has been done, it is refusing to accept its findings. It is not surprising. We are talking about a party that has spent years attacking all those who did not follow the leader's directive to a T, be they backbenchers, experts in every field, officers of Parliament or judges from across the country. If the party line was not toed 100%, the Conservatives launched all-out attacks. They were willing to make personal attacks and go after extremely honest people. It did not matter to the Conservatives, as long as they were on the attack.

Very little has changed since. Today, the Conservatives continue to do the same thing in the opposition, but everyone has gotten used to that. Their behaviour is so similar that it is as if Stephen Harper were still their leader.

Meanwhile, on this side of the House, we will continue to work in the same spirit of openness and transparency that has guided us since our election. The Prime Minister will continue to listen to Canadians and respond to their questions and concerns.

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's remarks, but I soon realized that we are in for the same old Liberal lines again today.

There is one basic question we need to ask ourselves. The Prime Minister looks repentant on camera and says he takes full responsibility for what he did, but he does not have to face up to any consequences. Is that good enough for the people we represent?

Does my colleague see this as an ideal opportunity to overhaul or at least thoroughly review the Conflict of Interest Act?

**Mrs. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I am very proud of the fact that the Prime Minister took responsibility for what happened. As soon as the commissioner's report was released, he accepted the findings and told Canadians he would do better next time. He said he would tell the commissioner about all future family and personal vacations. I believe he even took the opportunity to answer Canadians' questions on the subject at various town halls. The Prime Minister has taken responsibility and will continue to work with the new Ethics Commissioner. I believe the rules are in place and the commissioner will be able to do his work.

•(1210)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague said that the Prime Minister took responsibility. In good parenting, as in responsible government, there would be restitution if someone took responsibility for his or her action. If a child took a toy from another child, we would say that it was wrong, that the child should not have done that. We would then tell that child to give the toy back. Children do not say that they have taken responsibility for it, but that they will keep the toy. That is not taking responsibility. It needs to include restitution of the wrong.

The Prime Minister often has said something with which I agree. Not only is it the right thing to do, to pay the money back, but it is the smart thing. Would the member agree that it is the smart thing to do?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is important to remember, as I mentioned in my speech earlier, that the Prime Minister has responded to the commissioner's findings. The commissioner was very clear when she said that he had contravened certain rules and that he must now work with the new commissioner and inform him of all future travel, which is what the Prime Minister will do. We have taken every step to ensure that all of the commissioner's findings and recommendations are followed, and that is already happening.

I hope that answers my hon. colleague's question.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in my opinion, the problem with the previous question is that the Prime Minister does not get to choose how the RCMP decides to delegate that security. Those decisions are made by the RCMP and it does that at its own discretion. Therefore, the costs associated with it will be completely at the discretion of the RCMP.

*Business of Supply*

My colleague spoke about openness and transparency, and I thought she really hit the nail on the head. Yesterday we were debating a bill about openness and transparency, which the Conservatives are against. Could she expand on the importance of that openness and transparency and what the Prime Minister is doing about it.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Mona Fortier:** Madam Speaker, as I already said in my speech, of course our security agencies propose and implement solutions to protect the Prime Minister. The security agencies made recommendations, which were implemented.

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion before us. I find it remarkable that the opposition decided to use one of its few supply days to debate this.

The object of today's motion is, of course, not to actually debate an issue that matters to Canadians, such as jobs, the economy, or immigration, but rather to attempt to keep alive an issue after it has been fully investigated and ruled on by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The commissioner's findings have been accepted and procedures have been implemented to ensure future similar issues are avoided.

Today's topic leads me to believe that the opposition has no real argument against our plan to create jobs and grow the middle class.

We are putting in place measures to create opportunities for Canadians to better position Canada in the economy of tomorrow. I honestly expected the opposition to use this day to speak about the newest measure introduced by the leader of the opposition, which, true to the Harper Conservative way, is another boutique tax credit that will do little to help those who need it the most. Since the Conservatives know that their plan does not help those who are self-employed, those who do not qualify for employment insurance, or low-income earners across the country, their best hope is that as few people as possible notice what they have done.

For example, the Conservatives voted against the Canada child benefit, which helps nine out of 10 Canadian families, while introducing a plan that would do nothing for so many Canadians—

• (1215)

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member well knows what the topic is. He has referenced it and then has used it as an opportunity to abridge to a different topic on the economy. We all support a strong economy, but relevance needs to be maintained.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the member for Langley—Aldergrove that the member is just starting in his speech. I am sure he will get to the matter at hand. I also want to remind speakers that the subject is on the motion. There is some leeway in the debate, however, the points should be focused on the motion before the House.

The hon. member for St. Catharines.

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives believed that personal attacks was the path to victory in the last election. Canadians did not buy it then and they will not buy it now.

The opposition knows that security agencies make determinations on what is needed to protect the Prime Minister, as they have done with previous prime ministers. We follow their recommendations. The Prime Minister also accepted full responsibility immediately after the report was made public. That is what Canadians expect of their leaders.

When this government was elected, we committed to honour the trust Canadians had given us. We committed to bring new leadership to the government, listening to the needs of Canadians and working collaboratively to tackle the real challenges we faced as a country. We have and continue to deliver on this commitment.

Instead of focusing on these real challenges, such as employment, affordable housing, or advancing equal rights, the opposition is using this day to debate a subject that has already been thoroughly examined by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Let us be clear about what is happening here. The opposition is trying to second guess the work of the commissioner.

On this side of the House, we respect the work that is done by officers of Parliament. When they make determinations, we accept them. When they make recommendations, we follow them. This is in stark contrast to what the Conservatives did during their 10 years in power.

The Conservatives went to court against the findings of the Chief Electoral Officer. They eliminated the position of chief science officer. They ignored everything the parliamentary budget officer said and attacked the credibility of the office. They even attacked the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, which is not fathomable to Canadians.

This is not what Canadians want, and not what Canadians deserve. The Conservatives seem to forget that their belief that they know better than the institutions of Parliament is part of the reason they are on that side of the House today.

We put forward a proposal that included respect for Parliament, including its officers. We put our trust in Canadians. We continue to focus on them, while the Conservatives are focused on us.

I am pleased to speak about the great efforts our government has made to increase transparency and accountability, as well as our strong commitment to an open and honest government that Canadians deserve. We are committed to maintaining the trust we have earned from Canadians.

When it comes to the costs mentioned by my hon. colleagues, the former commissioner herself acknowledges that these costs were incurred as part of the Prime Minister's travels. As we have often said, wherever and whenever the Prime Minister travels, there are security costs. This is not new. It was the case for previous prime ministers as well. We have been transparent about these costs.

*Business of Supply*

We believe in the importance of openness and transparency, so much so that we introduced legislation to make political fundraising more open and transparent. The legislation would apply to fundraising events attended by the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, party leaders, and leadership candidates. Shockingly, the Conservatives do not support the legislation. Why? Because it would apply to the leader of the Official Opposition.

By further opening the doors to participation in our political process and by ensuring that events are open and transparent, we believe public confidence in the system will be enhanced.

Moreover, it is exciting to hear that the Liberal party has voluntarily moved to introducing these changes on its own, and will develop an interim system of public reporting. These are real measures to improve public confidence in our democratic institutions. They show how our government is committed to being open and accountable and ensuring ministers discharge their duties with integrity and meet the fundamental principles of our system of a responsible government.

The Conservatives want transparency to apply to others and ask others to apply a higher standard. However, when it comes to themselves, suddenly there are numerous reasons why transparency would be a bad idea. Not that we are surprised; it is the Conservative way.

When we look at the commissioner's report, the Prime Minister accepted the findings and was already engaged with the office to clear all future family and personal vacations. The Conservative technique under Stephen Harper was to always question the work of officers of parliament, and we see it continue today.

We are committed to being a government that is accountable to Canadians and lives up to the highest ethical standards. A transparent government is a good government. It strengthens trust in our democracy and ensures the integrity of our public institutions. Canadians support the progress that we, as a government, have made so far in this area, and they expect us to continue. We must never cease to earn and keep their trust.

● (1220)

I would like to reiterate that our Prime Minister has said on numerous occasions that he welcomed the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's inquiry, and has taken all necessary steps to ensure that all and any future vacations of the Prime Minister will be vetted by the Ethics Commissioner prior to them taking place.

I am proud to be a part of a government that is committed to being open and transparent with all Canadians and conducts itself in an ethical manner.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am a little puzzled. I need to dig into the issue a little more about how the government is open and transparent. The Prime Minister spent the whole year saying that he obeyed all the rules with respect to the conflict of interest laws. Now we find out that is not true. How is that open and transparent?

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister engaged with an officer of Parliament, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The investigation took a period of time. The Prime Minister presented his belief of what happened. Others were asked

for their evidence in that case. Then a finding of fact was made. Unlike previous prime ministers, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility. He apologized to Canadians and agreed to go forward on those recommendations without any concern. That is what Canadians expect from their leaders, that is what they expect from their Prime Minister, and that is what the Prime Minister did.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, that speech had such passion and conviction, and that is what the people from St. Catharines would expect.

The member started his comments by talking about the fact that the opposition was using this as its first opposition motion for 2018. It is another opportunity, like it continually does, to keep smearing the Prime Minister, throwing it against the wall, hoping it will stick. When the Liberal Party was in opposition, it talked about the bad policy the Conservatives brought forward, such as Bill C-51 and its attack on scientists.

Could the member expand a little more on why he thinks the Conservative Party continually hammers away at the Prime Minister instead of talking about some of the policies that can help the people they so often purport to represent?

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Madam Speaker, it is not surprising that the Conservatives put forward this motion. When we bring forward good policy that helps Canadians, it is hard to attack that.

We do not have to look any further than the recent by-elections, which have shown that the Canadian people do not have trust in the Conservative Party. They elected Liberals in places that had not elected Liberals in decades.

We are working for Canadians. We are delivering real change and Canadians see that. While the Conservatives are focused on the Prime Minister and the Liberals, we are focused on Canadians, and it is shown at the ballot box.

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently. The member said that what the Prime Minister did was ethical, yet the Ethics Commissioner said what the Prime Minister did was illegal. Compensation is a very important component of doing what is ethical. If someone does something wrong, he or she should make it right.

The motion today asks the Prime Minister to pay back money that was unethically used. There would not have been a cost for the RCMP if the trip had not happened. This unethical trip should not have happened and there would not have been a cost for security. The right thing to do, and the smart thing to do, would be to pay the money back.

Would the member not agree that this is the ethical thing to do?

● (1225)

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Madam Speaker, I will direct my comments specifically to what the Ethics Commissioner said. When she was asked by the hon. member for Thornhill whether there should be more penalties, she said, "I'm not of the view...that more stringent penalties are required." She went on to say that the Prime Minister was entitled to vacations and if he had gone somewhere else, the same cost would have been incurred.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

I am pleased today to rise in support of the motion before the House. The motion, in essence, refers to four major elements of the Conflict of Interest Act regarding the acceptance of illegal gifts, furthering private interests, being in a conflict of interest, and accepting travel.

The motion asks that the House find that when any of those sections of the Conflict of Interest Act are broken, sections 11, 21, 5, and 12, and the conflict of interest code and costs to the taxpayer are incurred, the member responsible must repay those costs to the taxpayer.

Before I go any further, the House should recognize that today is an important anniversary. It is not necessarily an anniversary to be marked with candles, fizzy drinks, and from the heart out, rainbows and unicorns, but rather one that the Liberal government would rather see forgotten, a day of infamy for the Liberal government. Today is the first anniversary of the day, February 6, 2017, when the Ethics Commissioner informed the Prime Minister that he was being investigated.

Why was the Prime Minister of Canada being investigated? Because the Conservative member for Regina—Qu'Appelle had requested an inquiry under the code into an improper vacation taken by the Prime Minister and his family to the private island of His Highness the Aga Khan. The commissioner was also responding to a request by another Conservative member of the House, raising concerns that the Prime Minister may have contravened sections of the Conflict of Interest Act.

The Ethics Commissioner found both requests reasonable, and that led to the letter written 12 months ago, informing the Prime Minister of Canada that he was being investigated for wrongdoing.

The Ethics Commissioner also informed the Prime Minister, in that fateful letter, that she was extending him the courtesy of an initial interview before collecting additional information or documents from other parties, third parties.

It was a gracious offer, but did the Prime Minister take advantage of that offer? Did the Prime Minister fully co-operate, as he has claimed so many times over the past 12 months? No. The Prime Minister did not consider the Ethics Commissioner's investigation a priority matter. He did not make himself available to the Ethics Commissioner for a full two months.

The focus of the final report, the official title of which may not be spoken in the House by order of the Speaker, because it is in the Prime Minister's name, is the one improper, illegal Christmas vacation, December/January 2016. However, the commissioner's investigation also revealed that the Prime Minister and his family had accepted a vacation on the Aga Khan's island earlier, in December 2014, and that in March 2016, members of the Prime Minister's family, a friend, and the friend's children enjoyed a vacation on the Aga Khan's island, requested by the Prime Minister's wife.

On March 9, 2016, two days before the Prime Minister's wife took that vacation, a representative of the Aga Khan requested a formal,

bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister, which, when held in May, 2016, discussed matters including a \$15 million dollar Government of Canada grant for one of the Aga Khan's projects.

When the Prime Minister, or the Liberal House leader, recites his lines that he accepts the commissioner's findings, and I will get to those in a moment, he just dusts his hands, says he has apologized, and commits to seek advice on his holidays from the Ethics Commissioner from now on.

What he has not acknowledged is his testimony before the Ethics Commissioner and, just as important, her interpretation of that testimony regarding the May 17 meeting with the Aga Khan. The Ethics Commissioner reported that the Prime Minister, despite receiving gifts and hospitality from the Aga Khan, had no concerns about attending the high-level grant-seeking meeting with the Aga Khan.

The Prime Minister told the Ethics Commissioner that the meetings he attended as Prime Minister were not really business meetings, but rather "high-level" meetings centred on relationship building and ensuring that all parties were moving forward together, that he left the details of deals, deals involving millions of dollars of Canadian taxpayers, to others. He suggested that was the way he saw his role in any high-level meeting, ceremonial in nature.

● (1230)

That is why we on this side of the House want the Prime Minister to tell us just how many other times he has behaved similarly with big name lobbyists or other organizations seeking millions of dollars, or much more, of Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars.

In the end, 11 months after initiating an investigation of the Prime Minister, the commissioner released her report, titled in the Prime Minister's name, a week after the House rose just before Christmas. Commissioner Dawson found that the Prime Minister violated four major sections of the Conflict of Interest Act: 5, 11, 12, and 21.

Except for one clumsy scrum in the foyer of the House, the Prime Minister has not meaningfully discussed the report with members, either in question period or more appropriately with the ethics committee. He has refused an invitation to committee saying he would rather answer in town halls, but where again, he has not.

The Prime Minister has been found to have broken the law. The Prime Minister accepted an illegal gift. The Prime Minister should do the right thing to attempt to regain the public trust, to demonstrate his accountability not only to the act but to his own ethical guidelines.

That is why this motion is before the House. That is why I hope all members will support the motion and the principles of accountability and ethical behaviour that the Prime Minister has so cavalierly violated.



*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I know the member opposite has studied this issue and sat on the committee that took carriage of it, but one of the things that I found hardest to fully comprehend in the report was what constitutes the definition of a “friend”. The member opposite and I have known each other for a few years. I have to admit I have never been to his cottage or flown, if he has a helicopter, in his helicopter, but he donated to one of my early political campaigns. I have certainly met his spouse. He knew my father. We knew each other through professional ties. I think I have spent more time with him now in the House than I did over all those years when we shared that profession.

However, if I walked into a bar and he was watching the Leafs and cheering for the right team, the only blue team I cheer for, I might buy him a beer. Does that purchase of beer based on the definition of friendship constitute a gift, or because there is a lack of letter writing back and forth, because I do not know the exact relationship he had to my father, is that a friendship or should I no longer refer to him as a friend?

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind members they have an opportunity to get up for questions and comments. I would hope that they are going to allow people to have their time when they are being recognized to speak.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Madam Speaker, I am sure that if it ever came to the attention of the Ethics Commissioner, he or she would find that our friendship is in fact probably far deeper than that between the Aga Khan and the Prime Minister and she was very clear in the report that the friendship developed only when he became leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Canada with influence over grant approval to organizations like the Aga Khan's worthy foundation.

We know that the Prime Minister in the very first scrum outside the House with the media, again something I refer to as rather a bumbling, mumbling response to media questions, apologized but in the same sentence he quibbled with the Ethics Commissioner's finding with regard to friendship.

•(1235)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member across the way has some problems with friendship and I am sure that is something he can address in other places.

Further to this question about friendship, and this was well established in questions that were asked to the Ethics Commissioner at the committee of which the member is a member, if the Prime Minister were actually friends with the Aga Khan, that would raise a whole host of different ethical questions. If one is a close friend of someone, then being involved in their applications for government funding, being involved in decision-making that would respect their interests and their relationship with the government, is a different set of ethical questions.

If the Prime Minister's plea is that, no, it is not one set of ethical problems that he walked into but a different set of ethical problems that he walked into, I might submit that it is a pretty weak defence of the legitimate criticisms that have been raised against him and I would be curious to hear my friend's comments.

**Hon. Peter Kent:** Madam Speaker, the question my hon. friend raised is exactly the sort of question that we would like to discuss with the Prime Minister, again in the serene and respectful surroundings of the ethics committee, where it is appropriate for members of the House who have been found guilty of violations of the Conflict of Interest Act and/or the code to explain themselves, to more fulsomely accept responsibility, and in the case of spending hundreds of thousands of Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars to support an illegal gift, to consider repaying that amount to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, it is a privilege for me to take part in this debate. As my colleagues know, I am a tireless crusader when it comes to shedding light on the unethical behaviour of the Prime Minister and his ministers and the free passes they give themselves. This latest scandal, in a long line of many, simply proves once again that the old Liberal culture is alive and well within the party. I would remind the House that, if the member for Papineau had not become leader of the Liberal Party, the Aga Khan certainly would not have invited him, so as to strengthen his ties with a potential future influential leader of Canada. Indeed, I myself have never been invited by the Aga Khan, nor have most of my colleagues in the House.

It beggars belief to see this self-important dandy expecting us to foot the bill for his whims and those of his family while Canadians are working hard and paying taxes. These expenses are unjustifiable. A taxpayer-funded illegal trip does not fall within his duties as a statesman.

This whole thing started when the Prime Minister contacted the Aga Khan's daughter in mid-July 2016 to ask whether his family could spend their Christmas holidays in Bells Cay. The Prime Minister's Office confirmed with the Privy Council Office in early November 2016 that the Prime Minister's family would be staying in Bells Cay from December 26, 2016 to January 4, 2017. The Prime Minister said that the only way to get to the island from Nassau was by private helicopter. He and his family travelled that way during their trip to Bells Cay in December 2014. Surprise. Now, it appears there was a third trip.

For a March 2016 trip taken by the Prime Minister's wife, who was joined by her friend and their children, she contacted the Aga Khan's daughter in mid-February 2016 to discuss the possibility of staying on the island with her children in the months that followed. The Aga Khan's daughter told Mrs. Grégoire that they would be welcome to stay on the island. On February 27, 2016, Mrs. Grégoire sent an email to her assistant in the Prime Minister's Office, as well as to the staff in Bells Cay about her trip to the island with a friend and their children, in order to ask that she arrange the helicopter ride to Bells Cay with the island's staff.

*Business of Supply*

It is nevertheless exceptional to see that there was an invitation to travel. I did not misspeak when I called the Prime Minister self-important, since he believes he is exceptional. When the former ethics commissioner appeared before the committee on which I sit on January 10, I asked Ms. Dawson to explain to us why the circumstances of the Prime Minister's family's trip were deemed "exceptional" and why it should be paid by Canadian taxpayers. I wondered if that was the position argued by the Prime Minister's legal counsel. I will quote Ms. Dawson, who said:

As I indicated in the report, Mr. Trudeau said that all of his trips were exceptional. In a way, they are always exceptional, because there is always a lot of security involved and all that. My point here is that you cannot use the argument that all travel is exceptional to claim that the holidays in question were exceptional. The circumstances were known, it was well planned, they had taken the helicopter before...

● (1240)

On page 61 of her report, Ms. Dawson also notes the following:

There was nothing unusual, unforeseen or unavoidable about this trip. [The Prime Minister] was well aware, given his previous stay on the island in 2014, that private transportation was needed to reach the Aga Khan's private island. While it may have been typical for guests of the Aga Khan to use his helicopter to reach the island, [the Prime Minister] knew that travel by helicopter was not the only means of transportation to the island. Members of his family had previously travelled to the island on a seaplane chartered by the Aga Khan from a company in the Bahamas.

Therefore when [the Prime Minister] and his family were planning their stay at the Aga Khan's island during the summer and fall of 2016, it would have been possible for the Prime Minister and his family to have considered and arranged alternative means of transportation to the island, including by chartering their own aircraft. Any alternative arrangements would have been less convenient and more expensive than the helicopter, but, given the prohibition set out in section 12, other alternatives should have been pursued.

For these reasons, I cannot conclude that there were exceptional circumstances in this case.

On page 56 of the report, the commissioner wrote that preparations for the trip had started much earlier:

As well, in the case of the December 2016 trip, plans were initiated for the trip in the summer of 2016 and firmed up by the fall, and the travel itinerary for [the Prime Minister] and his family was being organized weeks in advance by [the Prime Minister's] ministerial staff and the RCMP.

It is clear from the evidence that there were other options available to transport the [Prime Minister's] family to Bells Cay. The RCMP, when first advised of the Prime Minister's trip to the private island, began considering various travel options to reach the island, including by boat or by chartering a private aircraft. When the RCMP became aware that the Aga Khan's helicopter would be available as an option, it was considered by the RCMP to be the best option, taking into account that it was direct and easy. The RCMP considered the helicopter to be secure given that it had frequently been used by other dignitaries travelling to the island.

Although it is understandable from a security and efficiency perspective why the Prime Minister and his family accepted the travel aboard the Aga Khan's private helicopter to reach Bells Cay, I am of the view that the circumstances surrounding the acceptance of the private air travel were not exceptional.

I would like to come back to the March 2016 trip to Bells Cay. On page 58 of the report, the former commissioner writes:

The March 2016 trip taken by [the Prime Minister's] family was obviously not required in relation to [the Prime Minister's] official duties...As in the case of the December 2016 trip, [the Prime Minister] did not seek my prior approval in relation to this trip.

Like the December 2016 trip, there was nothing so unusual, unforeseen or unavoidable about the March 2016 trip that a finding of exceptional circumstances would be warranted.

...

For the reasons stated above, I find that [the Prime Minister] contravened section 12 of the Act when he and his family accepted travel on the Aga Khan's helicopter in

December 2016 and when his family accepted travel on the non-commercial chartered aircraft arranged by the Aga Khan in March 2016.

I would also like to read Ms. Dawson's observation:

In 2015, the Prime Minister issued a guidance document for ministers and ministerial exempt staff, entitled *Open and Accountable Government*. That document provides that Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must not accept travel on "non-commercial chartered or private aircraft for any purpose except in exceptional circumstances, and only with the prior approval of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and public disclosure of the use of such aircraft. Any hospitality accepted must strictly adhere to the requirements of the Conflict of Interest Act."

Ms. Dawson also said:

The rule as expressed in the Prime Minister's document requires that the public office holder must always consult with the Commissioner prior to accepting travel, when claiming exceptional circumstances. In this case, the Prime Minister did not follow his own rule.

She goes on to say:

As mentioned above, section 12 of the Act arose out of a concern over a series of instances where ministers accepted travel on private aircraft. The seeking of prior approval in such cases brings the matter to my Office's attention. This approval has been sought by other public office holders and would normally be favourably met where practical reasons support such a prior approval...As well, seeking prior approval enables my Office to look at the situation more broadly and to consider whether other provisions of the Act should also be considered.

Here in the House, it is our duty to abide by the Conflict of Interest Act. Everyone must abide by it, even the Prime Minister himself. In light of the damning report of former ethics commissioner Dawson, we can unequivocally say that the Prime Minister deliberately tried to be exempt from a federal law.

● (1245)

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his comments about this extremely important ethical issue that we are facing in the House. We know that the current government has said it wants to set the bar higher than ever before. My colleague was my seatmate before. I remember when we were first elected, we all sat down and were told the rules about what we could and could not do. Most members of the House do their best. When people make mistakes they pay back what is expected.

I think what is really bothering people about this situation is the Prime Minister's priorities. He was at a town hall, and a veteran came up to him and said he was prepared to give his life for the country and now the government was turning its back on veterans. The Prime Minister answered by saying, "Why are we still fighting certain veterans groups in court? Because they're asking for more than we are able to give right now." That was the answer he gave, which is incredibly disturbing.

The Prime Minister took an illegal vacation, and he had money for that. What does he think he is doing by providing that example of behaviour especially toward our veterans?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, in my humble opinion, in light of the damning report of the former ethics commissioner, we can unequivocally say in the House that the Prime Minister deliberately tried to be exempt from a federal law and that he abused the system by making taxpayers pay for his family vacation. I humbly believe that the Prime Minister should do the right thing and repay the entire cost of his personal vacation.

*Business of Supply*

•(1250)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I find it rich this discussion of ethical behaviour coming from the opposition party. If I remember correctly, Peter MacKay used a military helicopter for his own personal use at a cost of about \$32,000 an hour. I wonder if the member opposite could inform the House how much money Peter MacKay paid back to the government for that use.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, I understand that my colleague must defend the indefensible, but we are talking about a prime minister's personal vacation. He could have chosen to vacation in Canada. He could have chosen any location that would not have incurred \$200,000 in security costs. This was a personal choice because, unfortunately, he has a lavish lifestyle. He has very expensive tastes, and Canadian taxpayers end up footing the bill.

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I understand that he thinks the Prime Minister should pay back the expenses and that reparations must be made when there is a mistake. However, I do not think that this amount of money will make a big difference to the lifestyle of a one-percenter.

Should we not be looking at other forms of reparation, such as barring a member from the House or suspending his or her voting privileges for a given period? These measures would be associated with the member's, minister's, or prime minister's political involvement in the House.

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question.

All of us here, including the Prime Minister, must be above reproach. We are legislators, and we pass bills to ensure that we can continue our work and avoid conflicts of interest.

Why is the Prime Minister of Canada sitting here in the House after violating his own federal laws?

My colleague's question is a good one, and I have to wonder how the Prime Minister can be here in the House today, even though he violated federal laws.

**Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

We are here today to debate the opposition motion on the Conflict of Interest Act. This topic was of great interest to opposition members before the holidays. Indeed, this is a subject of great interest to all MPs because we must all comply with the act, so we all understand the importance of this debate.

I can assure the House that those of us on this side have the greatest respect for the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, as we do for all officers of Parliament. Their work is essential to our democracy, and they ensure the House functions properly. We cooperate with all officers of Parliament, which is what Canadians expect of us, and that is exactly what the hon. member for Papineau did.

In December, immediately following the release of the commissioner's report, the Prime Minister took responsibility, as any good leader should, and accepted all the commissioner's findings. He also took additional steps to ensure that all of his future personal and family vacations would be cleared in advance by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He will continue to follow all the commissioner's advice and recommendations on managing his family friendship with the Aga Khan.

As elected officials, we have a very important duty. We represent Canadians in this House. We speak on behalf of Canadians. As an elected official, I make it my duty to stay in touch with my constituents and find out everything I can about their priorities and challenges. How can we, as members of the House, make the most significant contribution to our society?

Obviously, ethical issues are important, and we will always acknowledge that. However, I also have to recognize that the Conservatives are once again out of touch with Canadians' priorities. When I run into my constituents in the street or in a coffee shop and when I meet with them in my office, they tell me that what they want is more good jobs for the middle class and those working hard to join it. That is what our government continues to offer them. Through smart and responsible investments, we are helping to strengthen the middle class and grow the economy.

The results speak for themselves. Nearly 700,000 jobs have been created in Canada since our government took office. What is more, the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years. In 2017 alone, 422,000 new jobs were added to Canada's economy. I would like my colleagues opposite to take note of that. That is the best job growth Canada has seen since 2002 and the strongest economic growth in the G7. The unemployment rate is 5.7%, which is practically the lowest it has ever been since I was born.

•(1255)

In Quebec, once again, the economy is doing very well. This is the best situation we have seen since 1976.

I hear from people that they care about their children's future. They want a society where good opportunities are available for all. I am proud to be part of a government that introduced and enhanced the Canada child benefit. It is so important. Right after the election, we raised taxes for the top 1% in order to lower them for the middle class. My colleagues opposite voted against this measure.

As I said, we introduced the Canada child benefit, which has helped 300,000 children across Canada. This is unprecedented. The impact has been tremendous for single-parent families, of which 80% are headed by women. The Canada child benefit has lifted 135,000 women out of poverty. It is a matter of ethics and morality. What we have done is very important. Clearly, it is our responsibility as MPs and as a government, no matter our political party, to support this measure. Unfortunately, the official opposition voted against this initiative.

*Business of Supply*

As I said at the start of my speech, the motion before us is very important. We recognize it. The Prime Minister also recognizes the importance of this motion. Unlike former prime ministers who were not committed to Canadians, the current Prime Minister toured the country to speak to Canadians in public town halls. In these public meetings, he answered Canadians' questions and listened to their concerns.

When some Canadians asked difficult questions, he did not try to hide. He was there to answer their questions directly and candidly. He answered questions about this motion, and he did so very openly and honestly. Like any good leader must, he took responsibility and accepted all the findings of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

I must point out the irony in what the opposition members are doing. For weeks and months, the opposition called for the Ethics Commissioner's report to be tabled. Now that it has been tabled, the opposition refuses to accept the commissioner's findings. This shows that they are not being serious.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's work is extremely important. We recognize and have the greatest respect for that role within our institution.

The official opposition's political games will not distract us from our commitment to Canadians. We will continue to listen to Canadians and take real action to make the middle class even stronger and to help those working so hard to join it.

We promised Canadians a government that will bring real change in terms of what we will do and how we will go about doing it. That is exactly what we are going to do. We promised to make investments that will grow the economy and create jobs and prosperity. That is exactly what we are doing.

• (1300)

We will do this while also meeting our moral and ethical responsibilities to this institution and to all Canadians.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I was a bit taken aback when he said that we do not accept the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's findings. We do accept the findings. The conclusion is clear: the Prime Minister broke the law. We believe that if an individual breaks the law, there need to be consequences. That individual must answer for his actions and give back the money to those who pay their taxes.

Why does my colleague think that it is not fair for there to be consequences when someone breaks the law?

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Madam Speaker, I would like to expand on my point and thank my colleague for his question. The Prime Minister accepted all the conclusions in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's report. I attended the presentation that the former ethics commissioner gave to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. She was asked what the consequences should be. She answered that everything was in the report. The Prime Minister accepted her findings, and now we all know that he has taken steps to ensure that, in the future, all his actions will be checked by the new Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

I do not understand why the Conservatives do not accept the conclusions that the commissioner put in her report as well as what she said during her presentation before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

• (1305)

[English]

**Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I believe my hon. colleague is sincere about looking for important changes in Parliament and helping parliamentarians perhaps do the right thing.

I respectfully suggest that the Prime Minister's accepting a free vacation from someone who lobbies the government was not only against the law, but I think most of us would understand that it is also extremely poor judgment at the very least, if not some indication that perhaps the Prime Minister is somewhat out of touch. As my hon. colleague mentioned, I think for most of us a little lightbulb would go off in our head when something like that came across our desk.

I believe that the conversation today is getting very partisan and politically charged. I understand that is what happens here; however, I think there is an opportunity to really talk about what needs to be reformed in the act and things that we could do to make it better. One thing that we have suggested is to start to give the act a bit more teeth and to have real consequences, including removing people from the House, and taking some privileges away. That would have some impact.

I would ask my hon. colleague if he agrees with me that there is a need for reform so that there are real consequences for people who breach the conflict of interest rules.

**Mr. Greg Fergus:** Madam Speaker, I think the most important thing in terms of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is that we want to make sure that we consult beforehand. That is the idea. The commissioner was very clear about this when she came before the standing committee of the House. She said that the role of that job is not to come down and knock people over the head at the end of it. The idea is for us to make sure that we conduct ourselves with the utmost transparency possible, which means doing things beforehand. It is to move toward a standard, and not to try to get around a standard and be knocked on the head.

That is what she said, and that is what I think the Prime Minister has been very clear on, as he has promised Canadians that he is going to be consulting the Ethics Commissioner before taking any family vacation from now on to make sure that everything is done according to the standard that the commissioner has set for us.

**Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion regarding the Conflict of Interest Act and the report made by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner with respect to the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons and the Conflict of Interest Act.

*Business of Supply*

The first thing I would like to point out is that the Prime Minister has accepted the findings of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and has accepted full responsibility. Further, the Prime Minister has also undertaken to consult with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner on all future personal and family vacations to ensure that they always conform to the requirements of both the members' code and the Conflict of Interest Act.

The Prime Minister thanked the former conflict of interest and ethics commissioner for her work and for her advice in managing his relationship with the Aga Khan. There is a good reason for this. The commissioner's work ensures that Canadians can rely on a non-partisan officer of Parliament to make determinations on activities of members of Parliament.

Although the House of Commons is naturally an adversarial chamber where accusations often fly back and forth one side to the other, Canadians know that officers of Parliament, such as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, investigate allegations and make findings and recommendations which are non-partisan. When the former conflict of interest and ethics commissioner answered questions on this matter before the ethics committee on January 10, 2018, she stated that the act has accomplished what it sets out to do, and that she stands by her report.

The Prime Minister has accepted the findings, and he has made arrangements to ensure that he clears all family and personal vacations with the office of the commissioner on an ongoing basis. The Conservatives are the ones who refuse to accept the fact that the report stands for itself. The former commissioner also found that no preferential treatment was ever given by the Prime Minister throughout this endeavour. In fact, no such preferential treatment was even sought. However, the Prime Minister has put in place measures to better manage his relationship with the Aga Khan moving forward. The fact that the Prime Minister immediately took full responsibility for the commissioner's findings is exactly what Canadians expect from their elected officials and their leaders. Not only has the Prime Minister stood and responded to the concerns in this House, he also has crossed the country engaging with Canadians on matters that are of concern to them.

Let us recap. The Prime Minister immediately took responsibility and answered numerous questions from the media. He answered numerous questions here in the House. He attended a number of public town hall events where Canadians were able to ask him unscripted questions on issues that they judged to be important. In fact, the Prime Minister came to Hamilton, my hometown, for a town hall. I am delighted to report that approximately 2,000 attendees were delighted that the Prime Minister would engage with them on matters that were important to them.

This civic engagement is very important to our government. This is why the Prime Minister is making himself available to connect with Canadians across the country. We are proud of this initiative. I want to thank all those Canadians who are showing up to the town hall events to engage. We appreciate their input and know how important it is for us to govern effectively.

I wish to confirm that at our town hall, as with all the other town halls, none of the questions were vetted, and the Prime Minister answered every question that was put to him. It was a great day for

Hamilton. This is what real accountability looks like, and it is very different from what the Conservatives did while they were in power.

I would like to stay positive on this subject, so rather than criticize my Conservative opponents, let me say this. Our Prime Minister believes that engaging with Canadians and hearing from them directly, and truly listening, as our dear friend Arnold Chan asked all of us to do, will make this country better.

● (1310)

Why? That is easy. We believe in Canadians. We know that listening to Canadians will help us serve them more effectively. This is not an approach that former prime minister Stephen Harper took with Canadians or the media. Our Prime Minister's acceptance of the findings and willingness to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is proof of the strength of the protections we currently have for our democratic process and decision-making.

We are currently debating a proposal to put in place additional members to protect our democratic process from undue influence. The Conservatives actually oppose Bill C-50, which would increase the transparency and accountability of our current fundraising regime. New requirements would be in place for how ministers, opposition leaders, and party leadership candidates would advertise their fundraising events, report on how much they charge, and let us know who attended those events. This legislation would give the public the information they need to verify that their ministers and party leaders are acting with an openness and accountability to everyday Canadians, who expect political contributions not to influence the decisions that will be made in their lives.

In regard to costs, Canadians expect that the Prime Minister's security is assured, wherever and whenever he travels. This is not just the case for our Prime Minister. This has been the case for previous prime ministers as well. The Prime Minister listens very carefully to the advice of security experts and makes sure their advice is followed. In her testimony before the ethics committee, the former ethics commissioner also pointed out, in response to the questions from the member for Thornhill, that expenses to protect the Prime Minister are costs incurred wherever the Prime Minister happens to be.

Today's motion focuses on the Prime Minister. In fact, this focus has been seized by the opposition for the past number of weeks. However, what the Conservatives fail to understand is that we need to focus on the needs of Canadians. That is what we are doing. We are working hard for Canadians.

Let us look at the results. Unemployment is lower than it has been in 40 years. In fact, some members of the House have never seen as low an unemployment rate as we have today. The Canadian child benefit has lifted over 300,000 children out of poverty. In Hamilton, the Canada child benefit has lifted 89,500 children out of poverty with an investment of \$25.7 million. We have lowered taxes for nine million Canadians thanks to the middle-class tax cut. We have strengthened the CPP and increased GIS benefits for the most vulnerable seniors.

*Business of Supply*

While the opposition stays laser-focused on us, we remain focused on Canadians and we will not be distracted from this focus no matter what tactics the opposition implements. We have a strong country and we have a strong democracy. This is thanks, in part, to the work of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who helps Canadians better trust their institutions.

The Conflict of Interest Act has been applied for the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister has accepted the findings of the report. He has promised to closely work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner going forward. This is what Canadians expect and this is how democracy works.

• (1315)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will say, with great respect to the member, that we are seeing some rather common verbiage coming from different members of the government, certain phrases that are repeated over and over again, which is interesting to observe.

I want to probe one aspect of the government's conversation on this, and that is that we repeatedly hear this idea that we should not be talking about ethics, that we should be talking about other things. The subtext is that ethics really are not that important, so why are we not talking about other issues.

There are many other issues that are important, but Canadians are legitimately concerned about being governed by people who set high ethical standards. The biggest reason for that is that if people show a lack of ethics in the things that we do see, then my constituents certainly wonder about the things that they do not see and whether decisions with respect to the economy and foreign policy are actually being made with their best interests at heart.

If we see a government that is profoundly informed by conflicts of interest, whether that is cash for access fundraising or whether that is accepting an illegal vacation, then it leads people to question the broad range of government policies. They can see how perhaps the government's decision-making process is not correctly informed by the public interest, rather it is being inappropriately informed by private interests.

I wonder if the member could just clarify her views on this. Does she think we should be discussing the government's bad ethical behaviour in the House, or does she think Canadians should just shrug and not worry about the ethical foibles of the government?

**Ms. Filomena Tassi:** Madam Speaker, that is a great question. I want to affirm my appreciation in particular for ethics. In fact, I commenced my doctoral studies in that area. I appreciate, deeply, the importance of ethical standards. However, I am surprised because I think it is the exact opposite. I think it is the opposition that is not accepting what the Ethics Commissioner has found here. That is what is making them repetitive and focused on this.

At a meeting the previous Ethics Commissioner attended, and it was the ethics committee that took place on January 10, 2018, there was an exchange between the member of Parliament for Beaches—East York and the Ethics Commissioner. The discussion was about the Prime Minister's full acceptance of the report and of the findings, and whether the act should require more than the Prime Minister's

full acceptance of the findings. Her response to that was, "I think that's probably all that the act should require."

Further to that, the Prime Minister not only accepted the findings of the Ethics Commissioner, he went above and beyond. What he said is that every future vacation that his family takes, that he takes with his wife and his children, he is not only going to consult with his wife and children, but he is going to clear it with the Ethics Commissioner.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments.

Obviously, she does not seem to accept the essence of the Conservative motion before us today. I would say that when someone comes to me and apologizes and I accept the apology, that is the end of the matter. When someone comes to me and says that they made a mistake and are taking responsibility, that comes with some form of redress.

If our Liberal colleagues do not agree with the Conservatives' proposed measure, what form of redress do they propose so that there is genuine action taken in line with the fact that the Prime Minister is taking responsibility?

[*English*]

**Ms. Filomena Tassi:** Madam Speaker, let us look at what our Prime Minister did after the response by the Ethics Commissioner. What did he do?

He accepted it. He did not go out and run a dialogue about how the Aga Khan was the honorary pallbearer at his father's funeral, a position that I think is only reserved for good friends. He did not talk about his father's relationship with the Aga Khan, and how much his father admired and respected him.

What did the Prime Minister do? The Prime Minister accepted the findings of the Ethics Commissioner and went a step beyond, saying that for any future trips, he would clear them with the Ethics Commissioner. Why? Because this is important to him. The Prime Minister wants the trust of Canadians, and he has obtained that through his response here. He will continue to do that. We are very proud of how our Prime Minister has responded on this issue.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to say I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beauport—Limoulu.

We are having a debate today because of truly unparalleled circumstances in our parliamentary democracy. Within two years of forming government, the Liberal government, led by the Prime Minister, is the subject of multiple investigations by officers of Parliament for inappropriate lobbying and conflicts of interest. Canadians who tuned in to the political debate in the fall saw the hon. member for Toronto Centre, the finance minister, plagued by questions of conflict of interest with respect to his dealings and legislation he brought into the chamber that he had lobbied for in the private sector ahead of time without recusing himself from that process. That investigation is still to come.

*Business of Supply*

Within months of forming government, the Prime Minister was engaged in cash for access fundraising events. The Lobbying Commissioner is investigating that. That report is yet to come. Today's debate comes from the report we do have before us and it is the reason we are debating the conflict of interest of the Prime Minister today. That was the report in the name of the Prime Minister released by the Ethics Commissioner just before Christmas last year.

What is unparalleled is that the Prime Minister was found to violate the Conflict of Interest Act in four separate ways. Despite the repeated rhetoric from my friends on the Liberal side of the House saying the Prime Minister has accepted responsibility and is accountable, there is nothing in the report that levies a punishment, an administrative fine, or any type of accountability measure on the Prime Minister. True accountability for a leader would be, at an absolute minimum, to apologize and reimburse Canadians for expenditures that should never have been spent with respect to his trip.

Liberals are suggesting Conservatives are being unreasonable. We are not suggesting the Prime Minister face jail time for this. We are not suggesting that an administrative monetary penalty, a fine, be levied. We are suggesting a basic form of accountability that most parents teach their children when it comes to accepting responsibility for their actions. The Prime Minister is famous for saying sorry, including in this House for several good reasons in the past, but sorry with respect to four ethical violations on his own conduct is unacceptable. He needs to show leadership to show that other members in his caucus need to be accountable for their conduct.

That is why we are here. Liberals do not want to talk about that, but they have yet to provide one example of how the Prime Minister is being accountable. Saying he was found guilty on four counts under the act is one thing. What is the Prime Minister prepared to do to show contrition, to show he understands the severity of the decision of the Ethics Commissioner, and to send a signal that both the Prime Minister and his caucus find that conduct unacceptable?

We all remember, after the lovely stroll up to Rideau Hall, #RealChange, and all of that language, the Prime Minister, to great fanfare, released the mandate letters for his ministers, in which he said their conduct not only needed to be free from conflict of interest but, to the highest standards, needed to be free from perceptions of conflict of interest. Even the appearance that something was inappropriate was the standard he set. He has not met that standard himself, and it is being suggested that Conservatives are being unreasonable by saying the only true way he can show contrition, to show Canadians and the Ethics Commissioner that he understands the message of this report, is to reimburse taxpayers for the cost of a trip that never should have occurred.

I will highlight how ridiculous his defence is. Because there is an exception to receiving gifts from friends, the Prime Minister of Canada has turned himself into a pretzel suggesting that the Aga Khan is a friend.

● (1325)

What did the ethics commissioner say about whether this exception applied? She applied an objective standard, which is, in law, what a reasonable person would take from this defence. I quote from page 36:

The evidence shows that, but for the Aga Khan's attendance at [the Prime Minister's] father's funeral in 2000, [the Prime Minister] had no private or personal interactions with the Aga Khan between 1983 and fall of 2013, a span of 30 years.

I think it is hard to suggest that one has a lifelong friendship with a person because one met that person once or twice when young. When trying to pin a legal and ethical defence on a friendship, a person will bend over backwards to suggest that this is a lifetime friend. The Prime Minister certainly did not maintain that friendship very well, if three decades passed with no interaction.

The report goes on to say that on several visits the Aga Khan made to Canada, there was no attempt on either's part to connect. There was no correspondence.

This was a Hail Mary pass defence to suggest that this was a friendship with Uncle K. It is not befitting the Prime Minister of Canada to make ridiculous defences when he should be accepting responsibility.

The Prime Minister had his health minister, when she was in that role, accept responsibility for some inappropriate expenditures. I respect her for that. I think she got the respect of the House for taking responsibility. The Prime Minister has not. To say he accepts the findings is not enough.

This is an administrative law, a parliamentary matter. We are not talking about criminal law. We are not talking about imposing sanctions or monetary penalties on the Prime Minister. In the civil context or the administrative context, reimbursement is the appropriate measure. A press conference held days before Christmas, when the Prime Minister stumbled through an apology in the most embarrassing fashion possible, does not cut it.

I was a cabinet minister at the tail end of the Harper government, which lasted for almost a decade. There are no reports entitled the Harper report. This is occurring within months of the Prime Minister forming government.

As I said the other day, it took over a decade for entitlement, helping friends, and avoiding responsibility to creep in under the Chrétien Liberals. It took a decade for that government to become tired and in conflict. It has taken the present Liberal government mere months.

Would I today like to be talking about the Prime Minister's trip to China, where he secretly promised a free trade deal before being sent home with his tail between his legs by the Chinese? Would I prefer to be talking about NAFTA? Would I prefer to be talking about the shameful display the Prime Minister made in front of veterans in Edmonton last week, when he suggested that despite his extravagant spending, hundreds of thousands of dollars on tweets alone, veterans are asking for too much? I would prefer to have an opposition day debate on that.

*Business of Supply*

The Prime Minister needs to show accountability for his ethics breaches. Leadership by example should mean that the Prime Minister holds himself to an even higher standard than he expects from his team. That is leadership by example. We saw the Minister of Health do that. The Prime Minister should take some lessons from her on accountability. Certainly the amounts are slightly larger than the minister repaid, but then again, it is hard to take a limousine to a private island in the Caribbean.

What was even more inappropriate was the fact that later on, the Prime Minister's family asked for additional trips. This is the level of entitlement and expectation they have.

At a time when we have debated the difficult circumstances families in Alberta have faced and the threat and imposition on Sears employees, Canadians do not accept this high-wheeling, high-flying Prime Minister who will not accept responsibility for his actions. We are here today to ask for it, and I only hope that his own members of caucus will pressure him to lead by example and repay the amount of money.

• (1330)

**Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague rose today on an opposition motion day, a day on which the opposition gets to set the agenda in this House. Instead of talking about the economy, the \$10-billion worth of investments we have made for veterans, or foreign affairs matters, when the member is the critic for foreign affairs, and it is clear that the opposition has no developing policy on foreign affairs, opposition members have decided to talk about an issue that has been dealt with in the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's report. The Prime Minister has said that he accepted the findings.

Instead of talking about economic growth across this country, about the 700,000 new jobs created by Canadians across this country, about a new pension-for-life option that will provide veterans with the financial security they need, or about a number of foreign affairs issues, on which Canada is leading the world, they decided to focus on an issue that does not deal with the very real concerns Canadians have. Why?

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Fredericton for his remarks, which are a continued diversion from responsibility that the Liberals are playing for the Prime Minister.

I would invite him to read the document from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner with her findings. As I have said, her objective standard is a reasonable-person test.

I like a lot of those Liberal members. I would suggest that most of them are reasonable people. Therefore, they have to agree that the Prime Minister violated the act. What the Ethics Commissioner did not provide, because as an officer of Parliament it was not her mandate, was an appropriate sanction or penalty. That was left to the members of this place.

If the Prime Minister wants to lead by example, he should send the message that a finding on four counts of violations should be met, at an absolute minimum, with a reimbursement of inappropriate

expenditures of taxpayers' money. That is what Canadians expect. That is why we are here today.

• (1335)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the opposition members make it sound as if the Prime Minister turns to the RCMP and says, "I'm going on vacation. I want you, you, and you. Let's go." It does not work like that. They know that there is a whole apparatus, a whole structure, behind it. They follow him wherever he goes, just as they have for every other prime minister.

I would like to ask the member a question I asked one of his colleagues earlier today and did not get an answer to. Can the member tell me this? He was around when Peter MacKay was the defence minister. Peter MacKay used a military helicopter for personal use to go to a fishing resort, at a cost of \$32,000 an hour. Can the member tell me how many times he insisted that Peter MacKay repay that cost?

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for that great question, because he set it up with the premise that the Prime Minister would say, "You, you, you, let's go." He did not pick the member. He picked the veterans minister to go.

How did this trip originate? I would invite the member to read page 19 of the report. Out of respect, I will leave the name out. It says that in mid-July 2016, the Prime Minister's spouse contacted the Aga Khan's daughter and inquired whether her family could come for Christmas. In that finding of fact, the Ethics Commissioner said that later on, she called to see if they could invite friends. That is how this trip originated. It was inappropriate from day one. Who were those friends? They were the veterans minister and the president of the Liberal Party. They should be hanging their heads in shame. It was a Liberal gala and junket. They should all go to their ridings this weekend and apologize to their constituents.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Durham for his excellent speech.

This matter involving the Prime Minister and the Aga Khan's island is very unfortunate, but something positive has come of it. It has allowed us to see through the government and all of its Liberal MPs who have been claiming to have a monopoly on virtue since 2015. They have been playing games with Canadians for the past two years, claiming day after day, year after year, in a disgusting and apolitical manner, that we Conservatives are not working for the well-being of all Canadians.

The Prime Minister's 2016 vacation on the Aga Khan's island is so troubling for Canadians that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner found four violations of the law. It is now obvious, after this trip, that the Liberals no longer have the monopoly on virtue.

All Canadians can now see the Liberals' true colours: a political, post-modern and radical left made up of social engineers who want to change our beautiful country's customs and traditions merely for the sake of change.



*Business of Supply*

Thank God for opposition day. Thank God, because when he was found guilty of four violations of the Conflict of Interest Act, the Prime Minister merely apologized, saying that he would not do it again.

If the Liberals were in opposition, they would do exactly what we are doing right now. Incidentally, this is not a tactic to divert attention from the country's finances, which are regrettable on several levels. We are doing our democratic and parliamentary duty. We must enlighten the many Canadians and citizens of Beauport—Limoilou who are listening. We must explain that this is the first time in the history of Canada, since its creation in 1867, that a prime minister has broken a federal law.

How did he break the law? The Ethics Commissioner explained it very simply by referring to the four sections violated. She wrote, "I [also] found that...he contravened section 5 for failing to arrange his private affairs to avoid such an opportunity." She also said that she found him "in contravention of section 11 of the Act when members of his family accepted the Aga Khan's gift of hospitality and the use of his private island in March 2016 and when he and his family accepted the Aga Khan's gift of hospitality in December 2016." She concluded by saying that "[the Prime Minister] contravened section 21 of the Act when he did not recuse himself from discussions that provided an opportunity to improperly further the private interest associated with one of the institutions of the Aga Khan...."

The Canadian government gave the Aga Khan tens of millions of dollars, my friends, and your political leader went gallivanting around on his billionaire's island.

● (1340)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I remind the member that he must address the Speaker and not the other members.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, my colleagues on the other side of the House are laughing, and meanwhile their leader has violated four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act. They are laughing, and meanwhile their government has entered talks involving tens of millions of dollars. In fact, it has already given tens of millions of dollars to the Aga Khan's causes. Whether or not these causes are worthy matters little. In the meantime, the Prime Minister was gallivanting around his private island.

Lastly, the commissioner found that "Mr. Trudeau contravened section 12 of the Act when his family travelled on non-commercial aircraft chartered by the Aga Khan". I am pleased that Ms. Dawson, the Ethics Commissioner, had the courage to write this incriminating report which says, in black and white, just how the Prime Minister violated four sections of the act.

This is all terrible, but there is something else that bothers me even more and that makes me sad. I do not say this lightly, and I rarely say this in politics, but I am sad, as all Canadians should be. I genuinely do not understand how a prime minister of our great federation could not only decide to take his Christmas vacation outside Canada, which is already a shameful and dishonourable thing for a prime minister to do, but also to travel to a billionaire's island.

I knocked on doors throughout the Christmas break. I met one constituent who lives in affordable housing. He had tears in his eyes

as he told me that he had almost no teeth left. He has had toothaches for years, he needs dentures, and he has a very low income, but his honour prevents him from requesting social assistance. However, he still cannot afford dentures and cannot afford to replace his teeth. He spoke to me about his teeth for 15 minutes, because it was such a big part of his life. What he is going through is terrible.

Across the country, Canadians are living in poverty. People are starving and freezing to death in Toronto, in Montreal, and in Vancouver. They are not dying because they have mental health issues or addictions. They are dying because of sociological problems such as lack of education. Poverty is a real issue in Canadian society, but not only is the Prime Minister not encouraging Canadians to stay here, he himself is spending time on a billionaire's tropical island.

Seriously, people are dying of hunger in Canada, but our shameless Prime Minister had the nerve to take a vacation that cost taxpayers \$200,000. The worst part is his total contempt for Canadians. He should never have done that. As Prime Minister, he should at the very least avoid vacations like that during his four-year term. Four years is not a long time in the life of a man who could live to the age of 90. He could not wait four years to go gallivanting around on a tropical beach while people here at home in eastern and Atlantic Canada are dying of hunger because of the employment insurance spring gap, not to mention the indigenous peoples on every reserve in the country.

The Prime Minister says that his most important relationship is the nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous peoples. This is ridiculous, since his most important relationship should be with all Canadians and not with any one group in particular. He is constantly spouting his lofty ideals, saying that he works for the middle class and for Indigenous people on reserve, and that he will make investments for Canadians, and then he vacations on a billionaire's private island. Talk about setting a good example. This just makes me sad.

Since 1867, and I think it is written in the Constitution, all governments are required to operate in accordance with the notion of peace, order, and good government. However, so far, the Liberals have been unable to form a good government. They continue to run deficits, when there is no war and no economic crisis.

● (1345)

They keep breaking promises. I will conclude by saying that, yesterday, the Minister of International Trade proudly announced that his program was huge in comparison with free trade. They have done absolutely nothing for free trade. That is why we introduced the TPP. The President of the United States is the one who began renegotiating NAFTA. Were is this Liberal free trade agreement I have heard so much about? It does not exist. We must denounce the Prime Minister's attitude and behaviour, and that is what we are doing today.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I have a number of questions for him. First, he mentioned someone in his riding with health problems. I would like to know what his government did to solve these problems from 2006 on. He spoke of indigenous people and that fact that there is a problem with drinking water on reserves. He acts as though this all started in 2015. What did his government do to solve the problem from 2006 on? I want to know.

What did you do in your 10 years in power to solve all the problems you mentioned?

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** First, I would like to remind the parliamentary secretary that he is to address the Speaker. Also, all questions, comments and speeches should address the subject of the opposition's motion.

I will give the member for Beauport—Limoilou an opportunity to respond.

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, who, in 2008, offered a national apology for residential schools? Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Who met with the Assembly of First Nations each year? Prime Minister Harper. We were not making grand speeches, we were working for the well-being of all Canadians without exception. We did not have a special relationship with any one group. We were working for all Canadians. That is what we were doing.

I believe that it is a matter of honour. It is completely unreasonable for the Prime Minister to go gallivanting around a billionaire's island when Canadians are dying of hunger. It is unacceptable.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I was encouraged to hear the hon. member talk about homelessness. He must be pleased to hear about the government's \$40 billion plan to tackle that. However, that is not the issue before us.

As my hon. friend for Kingston and the Islands has asked a couple of times, I will ask the hon. member whether he can point to the time when he got upset at Peter MacKay who spent \$32,000 an hour to fly a government helicopter to a private fishing lodge. Could he list the times he spoke up and said that it was wrong? There seems to be a difference in his speech versus what happened back then.

• (1350)

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, I wish I had a recorder when I saw that on TV.

Yes, I was discouraged by it. However, no report from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner was made or put forward on that particular issue. I trust the parliamentary agent, and nothing was produced in regard to the issue he is speaking about. However, something was produced in regard to the trip of the Prime Minister to the Aga Khan's island.

However, beside this matter of equality, my main argument today is that it was completely dishonourable for the Prime Minister to go to an island in the south. He should stay here.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the current Prime Minister is on our hot seat today for one

reason. He thinks he is above the values of middle-class Canadians, of Canadian families, where basic values of truth, taking ownership for one's actions, and making restitution for wrongs are taught. These values are also taught in our educational institutions, faith-based organizations, and even restorative programs in our prisons.

Why does the Prime Minister not pass this valid values test that, quite frankly, even my four-year-old granddaughter understands?

**Mr. Alupa Clarke:** Madam Speaker, the member is right. We try to set an example for our kids. I have two kids myself. One day I will speak to them about this issue, but I prefer to talk to them about the greatness of this country, the constitution, and what we can do for French Canadian people in this country.

I completely agree with my colleague. It is unfortunate. However, I will teach my kids how to be honourable in life and how to not ask for rights but for duties. It is what I can do, not what I can have. I will tell them to be responsible individuals.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Before I go to the next speaker, I want to advise that unfortunately we will have to interrupt in order to continue with some of the orders of the day, which include question period.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Youth.

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Yukon.

I rise to speak in the House today on the opposition motion put forward by my colleague across the way. To begin, let me affirm that we respect the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the important work that all officers of Parliament do. Canadians expect every member of this House to co-operate with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and we have done that from the very beginning.

Immediately after the commissioner's report was tabled, the Prime Minister took responsibility and accepted the findings. We thank the commissioner for her work, and we take her recommendations seriously. The Prime Minister accepted all her recommendations on how to best manage his close relationship with the Aga Khan. Moving forward, the Prime Minister will work with the commissioner to clear his family and personal vacations ahead of time.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has said that the file is closed and that the report stands for itself. However, while the opposition is focused on us, we are focusing our efforts on Canadians. We are working hard every day to support middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join them.

*Statements by Members*

Since my colleagues want to talk about accountability and transparency, I would like to remind them it was our government that delivered on its commitment to make government more open, transparent, and accountable. We implemented a new non-partisan and merit-based process for appointments. These help to ensure that the best Canadians get appointed to the many opportunities across Canada. We have also made changes to ensure that senators work for Canadians and not for their political parties. Our system is working.

Since our election, we have appointed numerous independent senators under our new process. We have also greatly increased the diversity within the Senate, especially when compared to the appointments under the previous Conservative government led by Stephen Harper. This is important, because a Senate that is independent and reflects the diversity of our country is a Senate that can grapple with the day-to-day challenges that everyday Canadians are facing in their lives.

While they were in power, Conservatives simply named their own Conservative friends to the Senate. That is the sort of cynical behaviour of which Canadians have had enough during the last election. Sadly—

• (1355)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** We have a point of order.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Madam Speaker, the member well knows the topic of today is on the unethical behaviour of the Prime Minister, and a call for compensation. This is not what the member is speaking on.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, I want to remind members that there is a bit of leeway when it comes to the speeches before the House. However, I remind members who are making speeches, asking questions, or making comments that there needs to be relevancy to the opposition day motion.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Peter Schiefke:** Madam Speaker, sadly here we are today, and instead of focusing on issues that directly affect Canadians, the ones I hear about every time I go door to door, the Conservatives would prefer to talk about the Prime Minister.

On this side of the House, we respect our parliamentary institutions, including the independent officers of Parliament. They are a critical pillar of our democracy. The previous government showed absolute contempt for this place and its independent officers. We see that again with them refusing to accept that this issue has been dealt with by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We committed to restoring Canadians' trust in government, something that Canadians had clearly lost faith in by the actions of the previous government. We are doing so through increased accountability and transparency.

Our government has made the unprecedented decision to publish the mandate letters for ministers. Until 2015, mandate letters were a secret and kept from Canadians. By making our ministers' mandate letters public, we are showing Canadians that we are serious about being open and transparent. Not only that, it permits Canadians to seriously evaluate the work of each individual minister to see if they

have met the objectives the Prime Minister has set out for them. This is but one way that we are changing how government interacts with Canadians. As I said earlier, while the opposition fixates over a matter that is closed, we are continuing our important work toward serving Canadians.

Canadians have other priorities, such as going to work, paying their bills, and taking care of their families. That is truly what matters in their lives, and we get it. That is why we are focused on helping the middle class and those working hard to join it. One of the first things we did when we formed government was to increase taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut taxes for the middle class. The middle class tax cut has benefited nine million middle-class Canadians. On average, single Canadians are getting to keep \$330 of their hard-earned money each year. That goes to the idea of regaining the trust—

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate the comments that there should be great latitude, but there should be even a small degree of relevance. We have been patiently waiting for that and I do not hear any relevance in the speech.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, I want to remind members that there is some latitude in there. The member has mentioned some of the words that relate to the opposition day motion. However, I will remind the member again to ensure his speech relates to the opposition day motion.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Peter Schiefke:** Madam Speaker, couples save \$540 in taxes each year. This is another promise we kept to Canadians, while gaining their trust, which is the topic of discussion today. The Conservatives do not want to talk about that. They would rather talk about the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We do not blame them for not wanting to talk about the middle-class tax cut, since they voted against it and voted against increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1%.

Another reason we are debating the motion today is because the Conservatives cannot complain about job creation under our government. Since we have been in government, Canadians have created almost 700,000 jobs. In 2017 alone, 422,000 more Canadians got jobs. That is the best job creation in a single year since 2002.

**The Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary will have three minutes when the House next debates this question.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

### ALEX LAMPROPOULOS

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of an outstanding individual, Alex Lampropoulos.

*Statements by Members*

Born in Greece, Alex moved to Kingston in 1962 and wholly gave himself to his community. In addition to being a teacher, he thrived in the political scene in Kingston during his time as a city alderman in the 1970s and 1980s.

As a matter of fact, Alex almost made it to this place. In a heated nomination battle in 1988, Alex was the favoured candidate to represent the Liberal Party of Canada in the upcoming election. However, when the dust settled and the votes were counted, he was narrowly beaten by a relatively unknown Kingstonian who went on to sit in your chair, Mr. Speaker, for many years. Indeed, this place missed the opportunity to grace itself with Alex's personality and boisterous greetings.

However, Ottawa's loss was Kingston's gain. Alex went on to continue his community building locally. I remember him fondly as a man with a big smile and a positive outlook.

His contribution to our community will never be forgotten and I hope everyone will join me in celebrating the life of Alex Lampropoulos.

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**2018 WINTER OLYMPICS**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are three days away from the opening ceremonies of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, and Canada is getting excited. In the Durham region, we are very proud of our athletes who will be wearing the colours of Canada.

In hockey, Chris Kelly from Bowmanville, a father of three, will be wrapping up a stellar hockey career wearing Canada's colours.

Pickering's Jennifer Wakefield will be wearing the jersey on the women's hockey team as they play to bring home another gold for Canada.

Ben Donnelly from Oshawa will keep up that speed on the ice when he competes for Canada in long track, team pursuit.

Cam Stones will hurtle down an icy track when he competes for Team Canada in bobsleigh.

We are excited because 224 men and women from our country will be wearing the maple leaf and doing us proud, the largest Winter Olympic team we have ever sent.

I congratulate those Canadians for their hard work and I thank the parents, coaches, and communities for supporting them on their journey. I know I speak for all of us when I say, "Go Canada Go".

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**50TH ANNIVERSARY OF GRANBY CEGEP**

**Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Granby CEGEP is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The CEGEP has grown from just 300 students in its first year to over 2,000 today. Over the years, some of them have gone on to be important Canadian public figures, including a former parliamentarian, the late Jean Lapierre.

The CEGEP's École nationale de la chanson has also trained many francophone songwriters from across the country, including Damien Robitaille from Ontario, Geneviève Toupin from Manitoba, Alex Nevsky from Quebec, and Lisa Leblanc from New Brunswick.

As a graduate of that distinguished institution myself, I can certainly attest to the quality of its teaching staff. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication of its chairman of the board, Serge Striganuk, and its executive director, Yvan O'Connor. Thanks to their strategic vision, the Granby CEGEP remains in sync with the needs of the scholastic community. Happy anniversary to the Granby CEGEP.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there are some issues, such as human rights, that must not be partisan. We also have a shared responsibility when it comes to climate change. When the Conservatives were in power, they pretended that climate change was not real. Today, the government acknowledges that it does exist, but it has sadly decided to do what looks good instead of supporting real action.

According to IPCC scientists, even though time is running out, it is still possible to prevent global warming of more than two degrees Celsius, which would have irreparable and dramatic consequences. Canadians have also been clear that fighting climate change is an urgent issue and we must do better.

I held consultations and received more than 100 proposals for fighting global warming. These are solutions that can be implemented immediately, both at the local and national level, in order to have an impact around the world. As the new NDP environment critic, people can rest assured that I and my entire team will work to ensure that these ideas are heard and, more importantly, that they are implemented.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**SUMMER SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this summer, the Special Olympics are coming to Antigonish, Nova Scotia. This is only the second time in the history of our province that the national games are coming there, and it is the first time in almost a quarter century.

We are long overdue, but I cannot say how excited I am to show the entire country some world famous east coast hospitality.

We expect to welcome over 3,000 spectators to experience the games, along with over 900 athletes, 600 volunteers, and almost 300 officials, coaches and staff. So many people are coming to the town of Antigonish that it is going to double its size while the games are in town.

There are a lot of ways people can get involved in this phenomenal national event. If they want to participate or volunteer, I encourage them to get in touch with their provincial Special Olympics chapter.

*Statements by Members*

Come to Antigonish, cheer on the athletes, and let the games begin.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has seen numerous pipeline projects dissolve in the last year, including TransCanada's energy east pipeline, the Mackenzie Valley and the NorthWest LNG project. This lack of pipeline capacity severely hinders Alberta in getting our natural resources to market, with the latest atrocity being the Liberal government's inability to move beyond words to action and to stand up for all energy citizens with the enforcement of the trans mountain pipeline.

Calgary Midnapore is a riding that was built on the abundance of the land to provide plentiful and bountiful energy for all citizens of Canada, a legacy that I am proud to represent and advocate for in the House.

We will not accept the weak claims of the Liberal government that it provides for and believes in our natural resources sector, when in reality it does nothing.

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**ROBERT "BOB" MORROW**

**Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my sad duty but honour as well to share with the House the passing of one of Hamilton's and indeed Canada's great mayors, Robert "Bob" Morrow.

Starting in 1982, Bob won six straight elections for a total of 18 years of service as mayor. Bob and I shared a love for Hamilton as politicians and as performers, a love of music. My last visit with Bob was in the organ loft of St. Patrick's church at the Christmas concert, where Bob played the organ and conducted the choir.

The impact he had on residents was so strong and enduring that on several occasions, 10 years after he was mayor and I was now the mayor, I was introduced many times as the mayor of Hamilton, Bob Morrow, which I took as a compliment. He was beloved by all segments of our diverse city and was a model to all of us in public life in how to relate to our community.

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[*Translation*]

**SAINT-EUSTACHE PROVINCIAL BANTAM HOCKEY TOURNAMENT**

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, I am inviting everyone to the 43rd provincial bantam hockey tournament in Saint-Eustache.

From February 4 to 11, more than 2,000 hockey players, aged 13 to 14, will be in Saint-Eustache. The Walter-Buswell complex will host 64 AA, BB, A and B hockey teams from across Quebec that will play 108 games. The championship game will be held on Sunday, February 11.

Of course, I am encouraging the teams from my riding to give it their all. I would like to thank the many volunteers, including Mr.

Jean Charest, the tournament chair, and Ms. Tardif, the honorary chair. I thank the parents for always being there for their children. We learn life lessons when we play sports. It is all about the hardships, the losses, the joys, how to win, adversity, and how to improve. I look forward to seeing everyone. Good luck!

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[*English*]

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation. More than 200 women and girls worldwide have undergone this procedure and lived with its effects.

It is easy for us to say that this is a problem that only happens abroad, and put our focus there. However, the reality is that many women in Canada live with this, and girls are at risk. Today, I would like to thank the women in Canada who have come forward to share their stories and ask for change.

I call upon the government and the members of the Liberal caucus to encourage the government to do two things: ensure that practitioners of female genital mutilation do not enter our country; and help protect Canadian girls who are taken abroad to have this procedure practised against them. Together we can educate, dispel myths, and end this practice once and for all.

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**CANADA 150 PIN**

**Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the end of January, in our constituency office in Horseshoe Bay, West Vancouver, we had the most lovely gathering of people nominated by their friends and neighbours to receive a Canada 150 pin for emulating what it means to be Canadian.

They are Buddy, conservationist; Jane, artist; Coyote, healer; Dianne, nature lover; Susan, Canada's West; Rick, CBC's *Early Edition*; seven year olds, Jonathan and Quinn, generosity; Vicki, human rights; Byrdie, citizenship; Terry, Métis culture; Margy, for selflessness; Minoo, for diversity; Michael, for gratitude; Catherine, for inclusivity; Bill, for civic engagement; Anne, volunteerism; Chris, kindness; and Gerry, connecting us.

I congratulate them. They are our shining lights. On behalf of each and every member of Parliament, we salute them, and we salute Canada 150.

*Statements by Members*

●(1410)

**AFRO GALA**

**Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every February Canadians participate in Black History Month, reflecting on the stories, experiences, and accomplishments of black Canadians.

This year, we give focus to all the strong black women who are the backbone of our communities. “LoLo” Linda Dozie, from my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, is one of these women. LoLo holds the personal conviction that if she wants to do something, she puts her mind to it and she does it. It is this motto that drove LoLo to follow her dream and host a forum called Afro Gala to recognize the different individuals who volunteer in our various communities and elevate the lives of people in need.

On February 10, LoLo and her husband, Onyeka, are hosting the seventh annual grassroots event Afro Gala. The vision is to connect across racial and cultural divisions in order to develop friendships and community cohesion. It is a night of food, culture, and entertainment.

In LoLo's own words, real change comes from people. We can certainly agree with her.

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**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, February marks Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, a unified effort among Jewish organizations and communities worldwide to raise awareness, champion the rights, and foster the inclusion of people with disabilities. This initiative, which began in 2009, highlights the importance of accommodation and inclusion of people with disabilities within Jewish communal life, and provides a focal point for Jewish Canadians to demonstrate leadership.

I am proud to welcome a delegation to Ottawa led by the Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, representing Jewish federations, service agencies, activists, and parents from across Canada. This group is here to promote the breaking down of barriers and the advancement of inclusion and accommodation for individuals with disabilities and their families. This is an incredible initiative that is being coordinated both here and in Washington, D.C.

As deputy shadow minister for persons with disabilities, I thank them for their important work in representing disabled Canadians across the country.

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**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week is an opportunity to bring together people of all ages from across Canada to celebrate and discuss our development achievements.

[Translation]

This week is International Development Week.

[English]

One of the pillars in our government's efforts to tackle poverty and inequality is education.

[Translation]

Access to high-quality basic education improves children's lives and gives them a real and fair chance to succeed and achieve their potential.

[English]

Last week, Canada announced a pledge of \$180 million to the Global Partnership for Education, which would strengthen education systems in developing countries and provide support for girls' education.

[Translation]

All week we will be acknowledging Canada's work through the hashtag #SDI2018.

[English]

I wish everyone a happy International Development Week.

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[Translation]

**FATHER EMMETT JOHNS**

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to Father Emmett Johns, better known as “Pops”, who passed away on January 13 at the age of 89.

Born in 1928 to Irish parents, he grew up in Plateau-Mont-Royal in what is now Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

He was a priest for 40 years before deciding at age 60 to reach out to homeless youth and founding Bon Dieu dans la rue. He borrowed money to buy a motorhome and he took to the streets of downtown every night to help homeless youth by offering them food and a place to warm up. He never judged them.

Today, the Dans la rue organization has more than 65 employees and 135 volunteers and still embodies the dedication, empathy, and respect that defined its founder.

An extremely supportive and compassionate man has left us. He was an admirable man, and we can honour him by carrying on his work.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

[English]

**CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM**

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the mark of a free society is the ability of its members to hold and express opinions with which the government disagrees.

*Oral Questions*

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was drafted and adopted with this in mind. Pierre Trudeau marked the importance of freedom of conscience and freedom of belief by listing these freedoms at the very beginning of the charter, under the heading “Fundamental Freedoms”. In so doing, he sought to affirm for future generations the absolute importance of those freedoms.

It seems that the son has forgotten the lessons of the father. This Prime Minister has introduced a values test for Canadians applying for the Canada summer jobs program. The values test is not about the activities or services an organization provides, but rather about targeting the personal beliefs of the individuals who run those organizations.

The attestation is an insidious breach of the charter and must be removed.

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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month and the achievements of black Canadians, we must reflect on the enormous work that lies ahead.

Our Prime Minister acknowledged the need to address anti-black racism and discrimination, an issue that has systematically limited generations of black Canadians in reaching their fullest potential. This is, in part, why our government signed on to the International Decade for People of African Descent.

In Scarborough—Rouge Park, we will mark the occasion by honouring Bev Salmon, a trailblazer and a fierce advocate for the educational and social equity of racialized people. Ms. Salmon became the first black woman to serve as city councillor in North York, and then as metro councillor. She advocated for black history to be included in our curriculum, and served as the first black woman at the Ontario Human Rights Commission. For her exemplary service in our community, Ms. Salmon will receive the Order of Canada. She has fought against racism, inspired a generation of leaders, and made our country a better place.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*Translation*]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner's report was released more than a month ago, and the Prime Minister refuses to face reality.

However, it is simple; when someone does something illegal, that person must accept the consequences. In this case, the Prime Minister took taxpayers' money for illegal vacations. The consequence is simply that he must reimburse Canadian taxpayers. Everyone understands this except the Prime Minister.

When will he do this?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as soon as the Ethics Commissioner released her report, I accepted it, took full responsibility, and accepted all the

commissioner's advice and recommendations. We are following all the recommendations and advice from the commissioner. That is what Canadians expect.

[*English*]

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Accepting responsibility means accepting consequences, Mr. Speaker. We all know the Prime Minister loves taking luxury vacations in the Caribbean and does not mind sticking the cost to taxpayers. He constantly tells Canadians that they have to pick up the tab for his luxurious travel. When that travel is deemed to be illegal, he should pay Canadians back. When will he?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that whenever and wherever the Prime Minister travels, there are operational security costs that go with it. What I can repeat is that when the commissioner put forward her report, we fully assumed responsibility. I took personal responsibility and pledged to follow all the advice and all the recommendations laid out by the Ethics Commissioner. That is exactly what we were doing.

Going forward, we will ensure that any personal vacation or family travel is worked through beforehand with the Ethics Commissioner. We will continue to follow all her advice and recommendations in these and all matters.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact that it would take an ethics commissioner's report pointing out to the Prime Minister that it is inappropriate to take a gift from someone who conducts business with the government, that it is inappropriate to take a free flight from someone who is doing business with the government, and the fact that it took him a year to disclose these facts, shows that he is also guilty of a tremendous lapse in judgment.

Our motion simply states that when members of Parliament or ministers are found to have imburdened the taxpayer with costs associated with illegal activities, they should reimburse the taxpayer. What part of that motion does he disagree with?

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this place, in our system, it is the role of the opposition to ask tough questions to challenge the government in place. That is what leads to a strong democracy. However, above the partisan attacks and the personal mudslinging, we have a system where an ethics commissioner objectively looks at behaviour, makes recommendations, and delivers consequences. In this case, above the partisan role that the opposition is importantly playing, we need to make sure we are following the Ethics Commissioner's advice. That is exactly what I am doing.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the Prime Minister thinks that by breaking the fourth wall and trying to escape the tough questions that we are asking he will in some way be able to skate through this. However, Canadians see right through that. Yes, it is our job to ask the tough questions, and it is his habit to evade those questions and ask other ministers to defend his illegal activity.

*Oral Questions*

Here is a simple question. When other ministers were found to have broken the rules, they had to pay the money back. Why does he think he does not have to?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, above the partisan attacks and the mudslinging, we have an Ethics Commissioner whose work we, on this side of the House, respect. The Ethics Commissioner made findings that we immediately accepted and I took responsibility for. She made recommendations and gave advice that we are following entirely and completely. The members opposite are trying to play personal attacks on top of that. However, Canadians can be assured that the Ethics Commissioner is the one who objectively looks at this above the partisan fray.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, demanding that a public official repay taxpayers for an illegal cost is not a partisan issue. It is a fundamental principle of accountability. Anyone else, in the real world, who was found breaking the rules would have to accept the consequences. Why does he think that he is different from everybody else?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House is accountable to Canadians. Also, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner ensures that every member of this House, up to and including the Prime Minister, is aligned with the rules. When that is not the case, the Ethics Commissioner makes findings.

In this case, we fully accepted responsibility. I took personal responsibility on the Ethics Commissioner's report, and will follow all of her recommendations and all of the advice she gave going forward.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when we ask him why web giants like Netflix and Facebook do not have to charge sales tax even though their Canadian competitors do, the Prime Minister says that he promised not to raise taxes for the middle class. We are talking about a tax that already exists, sales tax. We want fairness in the industry. It is unacceptable that the Prime Minister does not have the courage to ask web giants to pay their fair share.

When will the Prime Minister understand that and insist on fair treatment for the entire industry?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, as the NDP has said, web giants must pay their fair share. It is not web giants that the NDP wants to charge, it is taxpayers. The New Democrats want to make taxpayers pay more taxes. They want Canadians, Quebec and Canadian taxpayers, to pay more taxes for their online services. We, on this side of the House, promised not to raise taxes for taxpayers, and we are going to stand by that promise. If the New Democrats want to raise taxes for Canadians, they should say so instead of hiding behind talk of big corporations.

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, he does not get it. We are not talking about a new tax; we are talking about a tax that already exists and

must be collected by Canadian competitors. He needs to follow the example of France, Australia, and many American states that have decided to make these web giants pay. Even here at home, the whole province of Quebec wants to do the same. Imposing on Bombardier a sales tax that is not required of Boeing would be unthinkable, so why do it in the online sector? Not only is the Prime Minister trying to justify these tax breaks, but he is going even further by making deals with those companies.

When will the Liberals stop getting into bed with these web giants?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the New Democrats are misleading Canadians. They are talking about making web giants pay their fair share. It is not the web giants they want to pay more in taxes; it is taxpayers. We made a commitment to taxpayers that they would not have to pay more for their online services. We on this side of the House plan to keep that promise.

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about tax fairness.

Under the Liberal government, the CRA has come down hard on single moms, suspending their child tax benefits and forcing them to jump through hoops, but when KPMG was found to be running an international tax fraud scheme, whoa, the uber-rich got immediate amnesty. The Prime Minister went further. He appointed the top KPMG rep as the treasurer of the Liberal Party.

Does the Prime Minister not understand the basic principle of conflict of interest? Why is he putting the interests of the big Liberal money machine ahead of ordinary Canadians who play by the rules, pay their fair share, listen, and work hard?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have put more than \$1 billion toward the CRA to go after tax avoidance and tax evasion, because we know it is important for everyone to pay their fair share. That is exactly what we are committed to, but more than that, we are actually committed to making our tax system fairer. That is why one of the first things we did was lower taxes on the middle class and raise them on the wealthiest 1%. Further, we continue to look at ways to help single mothers, to help low-income families with the Canada child benefit that helps nine out of 10 Canadian families and is reducing child poverty by 40%.



*Oral Questions***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, really? Is he serious? Okay, so when the Liberals' top fundraiser, Stephen Bronfman, gets named in the paradise papers, the Prime Minister jumps in immediately and says, "Hey, no investigation needed here." Why? Is it because he raised \$250,000 for the party in two hours? Is it because it is a case of who you know in the PMO?

Ordinary Canadians do not get the royal treatment. Just look at how the Prime Minister treated veteran Brock Blaszczyk who lost his leg in Afghanistan and is fighting for a pension. If only the Prime Minister treated veterans with the same level of deference that he does his billionaire crony pals, would it not be a better country?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to the well-being of veterans and their families. We are delivering on a lifetime pension commitment which includes benefits and generous programs designed to help veterans live a full and productive life. This is in stark contrast to the previous Conservative government that for 10 years cut veterans offices, cut front-line services, and nickelled and dimed veterans while the Conservatives wrapped themselves in the flag. Even the member for Barrie—Innisfil said that the previous Conservative government had become disconnected with veterans and had lost a lot of trust. It is a very fair criticism.

We are not just going to criticize that government; we are going to do better than it did.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister is doing is looking them in the eye and saying no after having said yes to just about everybody else: yes, to Omar Khadr; yes, to somebody running a minister's Twitter account, \$100,000; yes, to his pals when they want to take a vacation in the Caribbean.

The Liberals are saying yes to everybody, but they are telling those who gave their country all they have that they are asking for too much. That is shameful. The Conservatives will hold them to account for that every time.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons from members opposite on dealing with veterans. For 10 years that party wrapped itself in the flag every chance it got—

**Hon. Ed Fast:** Answer the question.

**An hon. member:** Do you have any colouring books, Justin?

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

**The Speaker:** Order. Let us have some adult behaviour in the House, please.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the Conservative government cut veterans services, cut front-line offices, shut down nine veterans service centres across the country, nickelled and dimed veterans while using them for photo ops, members wrapping themselves in the flag every chance they got. It was shameful.

We have restored respect to veterans. We are investing in benefits. We are reopening closed offices. We are supporting their families. We are doing right what for 10 years the Conservatives did wrong.

• (1430)

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** That is so patently false, Mr. Speaker. It was the Conservative government that increased support for veterans by 35%. It was our last veterans minister who ended the court process and started settlement proceedings. The Prime Minister promised during the election campaign that they would never have to go back to court and then he looks a hero in the eye and tells him no. That is shameful and he has to answer—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker—

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

**The Speaker:** I am getting the impression some members would like their side to have fewer questions and that could be arranged. I would ask members to co-operate and pay attention to the rule against interrupting.

The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs has the floor.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that as a Newfoundlander I have seen a lot of fog but the pea soup fog of amnesia over on that side of the House is so thick.

Let me remind that side of the House of its record with our veterans in 10 years. Let me remind those members how they balanced their budgets on the backs of our veterans. Let me remind them how they closed offices, how they cut budgets, how they cut front-line staff.

We have developed a pension for life that does right by our veterans.

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**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was not just veterans whom the Prime Minister insulted in his town hall. Many Italians and Greeks have come to Canada over many decades. They have been an integral part of our nation's character ever since. That is why it was so offensive that the Prime Minister compared legitimate refugees and immigrants who have built this country with those who have fought and committed genocidal acts with ISIS.

Returning ISIS fighters are not refugees. Why can the Prime Minister not tell the difference?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the leader of the official opposition that we can tell the difference. We are a compassionate country and a compassionate government that cares deeply about refugees. We doubled the number of resettled refugees. We have almost quadrupled the number of privately sponsored refugees. We are the party that has—

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

**The Speaker:** I am having trouble hearing the answer and I would ask the member for St. Albert—Edmonton and others not to be yelling during question period and not to be interrupting. We have had far more than enough of that. Members are going to hear things they do not like, but they are going to have to take it and listen to it.

The hon. Minister of Immigration.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Mr. Speaker, we are the party that delivered on providing protection to Yazidi women and girls in Canada. We are the party that has redoubled our efforts to make sure that we continue to provide a home for the vulnerable who are fleeing war and persecution. We are the party that has almost quadrupled the number of privately sponsored refugees. We are the party that restored refugee health care that was cut by the party opposite.

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals still do not understand there is a difference between legitimate refugees, immigrants coming to this country, and people who have fought with ISIS. I do not blame the Prime Minister for not getting up off the mat. We know that he would rather be sitting there signing autographs.

I have a suggestion for the government House leader. If the Prime Minister likes to sign his name so much, maybe he can take out his chequebook and sign a cheque paying back taxpayers the money he cost them.

• (1435)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting day, because today we are debating the opposition's motion. The leader of the official opposition is a former speaker of this place. He knows that it is question period, and yet we do not hear questions; rather, we hear statements from the member.

If the member would like to hear a statement, I would like to remind Canadians that when it comes to the Prime Minister, whenever and wherever he travels, there are costs affiliated with his security. We respect the work of our security agencies. We will take their recommendations.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here are some questions for the Prime Minister, or rather the government House leader, I should say. I think that will be better.

Who travelled to a billionaire's private island? Who brought along the president of the Liberal Party and the Minister of Veterans Affairs to this notorious island? Who violated four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act? Who refuses to pay back the money he picked from taxpayers' pockets?

Everyone knows the answers to those questions. It was the Prime Minister. What we do not know is why the Prime Minister does not want to reimburse Canadians.

**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 many times, the former commissioner recognized that these expenses were incurred as part of the Prime Minister's duties. I have repeated this answer several times and I encourage the member to listen to the answer. It is because the expenses were related to the Prime Minister's duties. The former commissioner also said that.

**Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these are expenses incurred for an illegal trip that should never have taken place. I would like to read some comments I received just yesterday from one of my constituents. I would like the Prime Minister to listen carefully and you as well, Madam Leader: if he is really in politics to serve the people, he needs to pay back—

**The Speaker:** Order. Unfortunately, I must remind the member to address his comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

**Mr. Alain Rayes:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Here is the question that I hope the members opposite will hear very clearly. If he is really in politics to serve the people, he needs to pay back the money. Canadians pay for their vacations with their hard-earned money, and being Prime Minister does not put him above the law.

Here is what everyone wants to know: can he pay back the money he took from taxpayers?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, to best ensure the Prime Minister's safety, we always follow the advice of our security agencies.

The former commissioner acknowledged that the spending was related to the Prime Minister's duties. The difference between the Conservatives and our government is that we respect the work of senior public servants. The Conservatives demanded the report, and now that they have it, they are rejecting its findings. We, in contrast, accept the findings and are grateful.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today the dairy farmers of Canada are on the Hill to represent over 221,000 Canadians who depend on this sector for their livelihoods, and to clearly register their opposition to the TPP. Yesterday, the government responded to my question on threats to supply management with more platitudes about consultation. This government is speaking out of both sides of its mouth.

When will the Liberals listen to our hard-working farmers and stop making concessions that put our dairy industry at risk?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this dairy agreement will give significant opportunity to our farmers and ranchers right across this country. The government fully understands the importance of the supply management system. In fact, this is the party that initiated supply management and this is the government that will defend supply management.

That is why we are sitting down with the dairy industry across this country in order to work a plan forward, to make sure that the dairy industry and all our agricultural sectors remain strong in this country.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the dairy industry knows that the government is selling them out.

The cost of drugs in Canada is already the second-highest in the world. One in five Canadians say a member of their household cannot afford prescribed medications. We know big pharma is pushing for restrictive intellectual property rules, which will further skyrocket drug prices. Corporate lobbies want expanded investor-state provisions allowing them to sue our government for public policy that is good for our country.

Will this Liberal government stand up for Canadians and refuse a revised NAFTA that prevents us from implementing a national pharmacare program?

• (1440)

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government knows how proud Canadians are of our public health care system, and rightly so. This is something we always keep in mind, when sitting at the negotiating table. We also know that the affordability of and access to prescription drugs is an essential issue for Canadians. We are working closely with the provinces, territories, and our partners to provide lower drug prices and timely access to medicine. Public health care is a key Canadian issue in the NAFTA talks.

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**ETHICS**

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. The code of conduct says specifically that gifts or sponsored travel are to be publicly declared as publicly declarable information and placed on the public registry.

Now I have taken a look at the registry and I can note for the House that the minister has not placed either of these things on the registry for his trip with the Prime Minister to the Caribbean. The accommodation clearly was subsidized and the code is very clear that subsidized accommodation must be reported.

Why has the minister not reported it, or is he having some of that pea soup amnesia?

**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 report was tabled the Prime Minister accepted responsibility. He accepted the findings of the report. It was the opposition that demanded that the

commissioner investigate. Now that the commissioner has investigated, the report has been tabled. The Conservative members refuse to accept its conclusions. The Conservatives were exactly the same when they were in government and undermining officers of Parliament.

We committed to Canadians that we would do government differently, and that is exactly why we respect officers of Parliament. We respect the work they do, and that is why once the report was tabled, the Prime Minister made himself available to the media to ensure that he could answer all questions. He has also travelled the country, engaging directly with Canadians at public town halls.

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is still an obligation under the code of conduct to make reports available to the public. The Prime Minister did not do that either. The motion this morning is clear. We are asking for some holes to be plugged so that we do not have this possibility where the Prime Minister decides that he does not have to pay for his consequences. That is just simply wrong.

I have a simple question. Will the Prime Minister person up, do the right thing, and pay these costs?

**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 tabled, the Prime Minister accepted responsibility and accepted its findings, as every leader should. The Prime Minister accepted responsibility and made himself available to answer any questions, unlike the previous government, then prime minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government, when they would undermine officers of Parliament.

We will not take lessons from the Conservatives. On this side of the House we respect officers of Parliament, we respect the work they do, and we thank them for their hard work.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a duty here in the House to follow the Conflict of Interest Act. No one is above this legislation, not even the Prime Minister.

In light of the scathing report of the former ethics commissioner, we can say in no uncertain terms that the Prime Minister deliberately tried to be exempt from a federal statute and he abused the system by getting Canadian taxpayers to pay for his family vacation.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he will reimburse his family trip that was paid for out of Canadians' pockets?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the former commissioner found that these expenses were related to the Prime Minister's duties. It is the opposition who called for an inquiry. As soon as the commissioner tabled her report, we accepted its findings. The Prime Minister accepted responsibility. He reimbursed the cost of the flight, as he should. As far as the other expenses are concerned, the former commissioner found that they were related to the Prime Minister's duties.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal House leader, answering for the Prime Minister, says that he accepts the Ethics Commissioner's report. The Liberal House leader asks why the opposition does not accept the report. We fully accept the commissioner's findings that the Prime Minister broke the law. What we do not accept is that the Prime Minister is attempting to dodge the consequences.

Other ministers have repaid taxpayers for their ethical lapses, why will he not?

• (1445)

**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, we fully respect the commissioner's report. The Prime Minister has accepted responsibility. I encourage members opposite to also accept the fact that the ex-commissioner did state that these are costs that are incurred with the functions of the Prime Minister.

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**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in November, the fisheries minister committed to meet with B.C. and first nation governments to discuss moving open-net salmon farms off the wild salmon migration route. Months later, they are still waiting. Last week, the Prime Minister unbelievably said no oceans protection plan unless the Kinder Morgan pipeline is built. This is unacceptable. This morning, the government committed to considering impacts on first nations under a revised Fisheries Act.

How can the Liberals justify approving Kinder Morgan after using Harper's gutted assessment process, which failed to adequately consult first nations?

**Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government supports a new vision for environmentally sustainable aquaculture, and we are working with the province and indigenous communities to consider all options to ensure that we protect our marine environment. While the industry generates \$2 billion in economic activity, approximately \$600 million in labour income, we understand a clean environment is the greatest economic driver. It is important that we get this right, because sustainable aquaculture provides year-round jobs paying thousands of Canadians, including those in more than 50 first nations, many of whom live in rural coastal communities.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, come on, really? At his Nanaimo town hall, the Prime Minister said that he is holding B.C. hostage to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. He said the oceans protection plan, which he had been bragging will fix abandoned vessels, oil spills, and bulk commercial anchorages, will not proceed unless bitumen oil tankers do. However, yesterday in committee, the transport minister said the exact opposite, so who is right?

When will the Prime Minister finally stand up for coastal communities instead of blackmailing them?

**Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The oceans protection plan is a world-leading plan that will bring marine safety to levels in Canada that are not seen anywhere else in the world. Yes, we are committed to coastal communities. We are committed to abandoned vessel removal. We are committed to restoring the southern resident killer whales. We are committed to having a faster response in case of any problems along our coastal areas. This is a program that the people of B.C., the coastal people of B.C., are welcoming. This is something that has never been done in any other country.

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*[Translation]***HEALTH**

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the first week of February is Eating Disorder Awareness Week. Between 2% to 3% of Canadians have an eating disorder.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2016, millions of Canadians met the diagnostic criteria for an eating disorder. Furthermore, one in ten people with an eating disorder will die, which is the highest mortality rate among mental illnesses.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House what the government is doing to support people with eating disorders and their families?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Saint-Laurent, for her excellent work and for giving me an opportunity to highlight our government's commitments to helping people living with eating disorders.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses that come with serious medical complications. This is why our government invested more than \$5 million in budget 2017 to provide better mental health support across the country. These investments will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians.

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*[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in his first few months in office, the Prime Minister spent \$4.3 billion on projects outside of Canada. He spent \$10 million on Omar Khadr. He spent millions of dollars moving his staff to Ottawa, promoting his tweets, building an ice rink, and even cardboard cut-outs of himself. Last week we learned that the Prime Minister will spare no expense on self-promotion, but he thinks that veterans are asking for too much.

*Oral Questions*

When will the Prime Minister apologize for making a promise to veterans he knew he would never keep?

• (1450)

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as many on this side of the House know, I relish the opportunity to compare the record of this government in two and a half years on our veterans with the 10 years by the previous government. To say that budgets were not cut, we know they were cut. Why? Because we restored them. To say that offices were not closed, we know they were closed. Why? Because we reopened them. To say that veterans were not ignored, we know they were ignored. Why? Because we listened to them. We have spent \$10 billion of new money on our veterans in two and a half years.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our veterans have been blatantly betrayed by the Prime Minister breaking his word. Recently, he told our veterans they are asking for more than we can afford, yet he charged taxpayers \$200,000 for his illegal vacation and the Minister of Veterans Affairs joined the Prime Minister on that illegal trip. It is a sad day when the minister tags along on the Prime Minister's illegal vacation, blowing \$200,000 and later telling veterans who suffered injuries fighting for our country that they are asking too much.

Does the minister not agree with our veterans that the \$200,000 the PM used for his illegal vacation would have been better spent on—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to veterans. We made a promise to veterans that they had heard for a long time. In 2006, all sides of the House sat down with veterans and decided on a new veterans charter. They decided that it would be a living document, that it would be something that would provide for our veterans in the future.

For 10 years, the previous government sat on that document. The Conservatives did nothing but cut budgets, cut offices, and ignore the voices of our veterans. We have invested \$10 billion—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful that the Prime Minister said that our veterans, my former brothers and sisters in arms, are asking too much. What bothers soldiers the most is when the government, or the country they were prepared to give their life to, lies to their face.

The Prime Minister takes our veterans to court, even though he promised not to do so, and he reached a settlement with a terrorist.

Why does the Prime Minister have so much contempt for our veterans?

[*English*]

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have provided \$10 billion in new money for our veterans, for Veterans Affairs offices, for their budgets, for the lives of our veterans. There are so many examples that are given to me when I walk into the House, a retired major with 25 years of service

with an 100% disability assessment who will now receive nearly \$9,000 a month in both pain and suffering compensation and income replacement. That is not a betrayal. That is a commitment in action, finally, for our veterans.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is simply not true. The Prime Minister made a campaign promise to Canada's veterans. Using veterans, including those in his caucus as a backdrop, the Prime Minister promised that he would immediately restore life-long pensions and that no veteran should have to fight their government in court. We now know that he used all of these veterans, including his caucus, simply as political pawns.

While racking up billions in debt, giving billions to the UN, billions away outside Canada for his pet projects, and to Omar Khadr, how can he justify saying to our veterans that they are asking more than he can give them?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, they cut budgets, ignored voices, and closed offices.

Let me tell the House about someone else. A retired major with 25 years of service, 20% disabled, which basically means they may have a loss of hearing or perhaps a bad knee or ankle, will now receive over \$70,000 in pain and suffering benefits alone, not to mention education and training benefits to help them transition to a civilian life.

That is not a prop; that is a real person affected by our new investments for our veterans.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals came to power, more than 193,000 public servants have been affected by the Trudeau government's inability to fix the Phoenix pay system. That is 73% of the total number of federal employees. This is not stopping the Liberals from shifting the blame onto the previous government. The Conservatives are not the ones who will be fixing the problem.

When will the government take responsibility and stop this financial disaster?

• (1455)

**The Speaker:** I must remind the hon. member for Jonquière that she must not refer to members by name. They are to be referred to by their titles.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have tremendous respect for our public service. In Canada, we have one of the best public services anywhere in the world. Their work is valuable.

That is why they deserve to be paid on time and accurately. We recognize the challenges of the Phoenix pay system. We also recognize that the cause was the failure of the Conservative government to maintain the existing system until a new system was working. To achieve a little surplus on the eve of an election, Conservatives cut 700 pay advisers. That is costing the public service today.

We are going to fix this.

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

*[Translation]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

*[English]*

As I was saying, everyone is going to hear things they do not like, but we have to hear those things whether we like them or not.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, get this: a Canadian mining exploration company is operating in Mongolia, and it is reporting \$2.1 billion in profit in a Luxembourg-based corporation with one part-time employee, all of this with the Canada Revenue Agency's blessing. It would seem, then, that the cat is out of the bag. The minister is facilitating these dubious tax schemes.

In the fight against tax evasion, why is the minister part of the problem rather than the solution?

**Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance abroad to ensure that we have a system that is fair for all Canadians. This is a global issue, and that is why Canada is working closely with its international partners, including the OECD, to improve the exchange of information.

As a result of the investments in the last two budgets, the agency is now in a position to carry out an annual assessment of the risks related to activities of major multinationals.

As my colleague knows very well, I cannot comment on specific cases.

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**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with the TPP comes unprecedented opportunity for Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. However, unlike the Liberals, we think conversations with farmers should have happened before the agreement, not after.

The minister has been out of the picture for 16 days now. He has not said a word about mitigation measures for dairy, egg, and poultry producers. The previous Conservative government offered up \$4.3 billion. Dairy producers are in Ottawa today.

What does the minister have to say to them?

*[English]*

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the dairy farmers are here today. In fact, I have sat down with the dairy farmers, all of the supply sector, on numerous occasions.

When this CPTPP has been signed, I will sit down and discuss the path forward, to make sure that our supply management that this party put in place, that this government will defend on a united front, I might add, and the agricultural sector, continue to thrive in this country.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are carrying out an ideological attack on Canadian agriculture, with warning labels on dairy and meat products, and a Canadian food guide that discourages people from eating healthy animal protein and dairy. Not one single farmer or processor was allowed to give any input on these decisions.

The Liberals are devastating Canadian businesses and farm families on data that is based on bad science.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food stand up for our farmers and stop this attack on Canadian agriculture?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the health and safety of Canadians and supporting an environment that makes healthy choices the easy choice. For over 70 years, Canada's food guide has been Canada's most trusted source of information on healthy eating. As part of the healthy eating strategy, work to update Canada's food guide is well under way, and we are engaging with Canadians, experts, and stakeholders from all across the country. The most recent public consultation of the new food guide concluded in late August, and the result of these will be published in the near future. I also look forward to meeting with the industry as well.

● (1500)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Minister of Agriculture has been sidelined.

Farmers have been labelled tax cheats, the makeshift dairy industry program left 80% of producers high and dry, the Standing Committee on Health refused to hear what producers and processors had to say about the future food guide, and the minister has had nothing to say about mitigation measures for 16 days. Will anyone on that side who represents an agricultural riding go over there, wake up the Minister of Agriculture, and get him to stand up for Canadian farmers for once?

[English]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question because it gives me an opportunity to indicate in fact what we have done. We put a \$350 million program in place and ordered that \$250 million would be put to the dairy farmers in order to make sure they remain on the cutting edge.

I can tell my hon. colleague and the House that \$25 million of that has already been approved. What it is doing is making sure that the supply management sector in the dairy industry remains strong and on the cutting edge.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with a fast-growing and more knowledge-based digital economy, we need to make sure that our young people have the skills and knowledge they need to compete, to succeed, and also to innovate.

[English]

Taking this initiative to instill that passion for learning is vital to our collective success. Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development please explain what steps the government is taking to ensure our young people are ready for the digital global economy of today, tomorrow, and beyond.

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for his question. We have discussed on several occasions the importance of coding, digital skills, and digital literacy. Of course, it is hard work as well, as the member opposite just said. As we know, these are fundamental skills for the jobs of today and the future, from video game developers, to farming, to forestry, to mining.

That is why we introduced and launched a \$50 million CanCode initiative. This will help up to one million students and teachers across the country to learn how to code. We are investing in our number one resource, our people.

\* \* \*

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week, exactly one day before World Wetlands Day, the Liberals killed the national wetlands conservation fund. Meanwhile, the minister received \$40 million to spend on policy, communication, and engagement. That is another example of Liberals talking the talk but not walking the walk. They claim to be champions of the environment, but then cut essential environmental programs to spend more money on photographers and press releases.

Will the minister now reverse this terrible decision? Will she stand up for Canada's wetlands?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the

#### Oral Questions

member opposite for his strong support for the environment. I absolutely support standing up for wetlands and watersheds. That is why we are spending \$70.5 million over five years to protect them.

We have also invested in the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, and the St. Lawrence watersheds. We understand that healthy watersheds are vital to the ecological, economic, and cultural well-being of our peoples, and wetlands are crucial to a healthy watershed. We are going to continue to work together with the communities to ensure the health of our watersheds.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting to see the Conservative members suddenly standing up for supply management in the House today, considering that it was the previous Conservative government that began chipping away at our supply management system in both the comprehensive economic and trade agreement and the trans-Pacific partnership.

The current Liberal government continues to threaten our supply management system. Our farmers do not deserve this hypocrisy. They deserve better. They deserve to know the truth.

When will the government stand up and really fight for our supply management system and Canadian farmers?

[English]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question.

The fact of the matter is, as I have said many times in this House, we are the party that fought to implement supply management and we are the government that is going to defend it. We have done that with action, with the innovation program for the dairy sector.

The CPTPP gives opportunity for all the agricultural sectors right across this country, which is a significant opportunity. With that, we fully understand how important supply management is for this country. We have and will continue to make sure that we fully support the supply management program.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

#### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, UNICEF has observed an overall global decline in female genital mutilation, but not all countries have made progress, and decline has been uneven. UNICEF considers that while current progress is positive, the decline is not keeping up with increasing population growth. If trends continue, the number of girls and women undergoing FGM will rise significantly over the next 15 years.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie inform this House on how Canada is addressing this issue in developing countries?

**Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government strongly condemns female genital mutilation, FGM, and other forms of violence, which affects 200 million women and girls worldwide.

I would like to thank my colleague from London North Centre for his question and his advocacy around a human rights issue.

Today, in Benin, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie announced \$3 million towards a project that will reduce FGM and other forms of gender-based violence.

I want to emphasize that women's rights are human rights, and we will continue to support education and awareness that prevent FGM and support survivors.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has to answer for her decision to eliminate the national wetland conservation fund. Since 2014, the fund has supported projects that protect and enhance thousands of hectares of wetlands. Wetlands are vital for sequestering carbon, improving water quality, creating fish and wildlife habitat, protecting endangered species, and managing watersheds.

Conservation groups across Canada are outraged by what the minister did, and now know that these Liberals are phony environmentalists. Why would the government eliminate the national wetland conservation fund, which has delivered such important benefits for Canada's environment?

**Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his long-standing advocacy of conservation.

Let me be 100% clear. We always will stand up for our environment, and we will always stand up for our watersheds. We have made significant investments, and we will continue to do so. We have other things we also need to do, which is making sure that we support indigenous community-based monitoring in the oil sands. We need to address species at risk, including the recovery of caribou. We need to support other conservation programs.

I encourage those who have received support under this program to continue to look for other opportunities with our government to continue their good work.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the middle of a by-election, the Prime Minister promised farmers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean that the government “would not make any concessions when it comes to supply management”.

Today, we know that he sacrificed 3.25% of the dairy sector and made concessions regarding eggs and poultry as part of the TPP.

Did he decide to break his promise after the by-election or did he deliberately lie to farmers?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would like to recognize the dairy farmers who are here with us and who I had an opportunity to meet with today.

Our party has always defended supply management. Our prime ministers have always done so and so has our party. We understand farmers' concerns. That is why, two days after the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership was announced, I met with some thirty farmers in Montreal. We understand their concerns. We are going to continue to discuss the impact of this agreement with them. We are going to continue that discussion because it is an essential sector of the Canadian economy.

**Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the by-election, the Prime Minister promised farmers that he would not make any concessions on supply management under the TPP.

Three months later, the government failed to stand up for our dairy, egg, and cheese producers. Where I come from, we have a word for someone who tells people something to their face when he has something to gain and then turns around and does exactly the opposite.

What does the Prime Minister call those sorts of people? Where I come from, we call them liars.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. I would ask hon. members to choose their words carefully and not use words that may create disorder in the House of Commons.

The hon. Minister of International Trade.

● (1510)

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, I want to recognize the dairy farmers who are here. Today we are going to elevate the debate on this issue because I think that all members on this side of the House recognize the work of our farmers and appreciate our dairy farmers. That is why, two days after the TPP announcement, I met with these people in Montreal. We will continue that discussion. Together with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, we will continue to defend supply management. We know how important it is for Canadian industry.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Education for the province of British Columbia.

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



*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** Mr. Speaker, in a moment I will be seek the unanimous consent of the House on a motion regarding oral question period, referred to in Standing Order 37 and in greater detail in chapter 11 in Bosc and Gagnon.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, you will remember that even during the darkest days of the Mike Duffy scandal, when the leader of the official opposition, my friend from Outremont, was delivering devastating blow after blow to then prime minister Stephen Harper and his government, the prime minister at the time still answered the NDP leader's questions, even the tough ones. However, the current Prime Minister has started cherry-picking which leader questions he is willing to answer in the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Yesterday and today he even refused to answer—

**The Speaker:** Order. That seems to be a matter of debate. I would ask the hon. member to ask her question regarding her motion.

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau:** As stated in Bosc and Gagnon, if the essence of Parliament is government accountability, then surely the essence of accountability is the question period in the Canadian House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I am sure if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that, in the opinion of the House, when he is present, the Prime Minister should respond to all oral questions from the opposition party, even the tough ones.

**The Speaker:** Order. Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is no unanimous consent.

● (1520)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 439)

## YEAS

## Members

Albas	Albrecht
Allison	Arnold
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Brassard	Brown
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Dreeshen
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kusie	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Marcil
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Paupé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Raïtt	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Tilson
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga— 92

## NAYS

## Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Bitte	Blaikie
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boulterice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

The House resumed from February 5 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:** It being 3:13 p.m., the House will now proceed to the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-50.

Call in the members.

[English]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 2, 3, and 5 to 11.

*Government Orders*

Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Jolibois	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khera
Kwan	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk (Sœurs)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Érables)
Monsef	Moore
Morrissey	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Ramsey
Rankin	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stetski	Stewart
Tan	Tassi
Trudeau	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Weir	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid — 207	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2, 3, and 5 to 11 defeated.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 4.

[*English*]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the result from the previous vote to this vote, with the Liberals voting against.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote, with Conservative members voting yea.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP also agrees to apply the vote and will be voting yes.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois agree to apply the vote, and we will vote yes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the vote and I vote yes.

**Mr. Darshan Singh Kang:** Mr. Speaker, I am voting no.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 4, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 440)

## YEAS

## Members

Albas	Albrecht
Allison	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brousseau	Brown
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Julian

Kelly  
Kitchen  
Kwan  
Laverdière  
Liepert  
Lobb  
MacGregor  
Maguire  
Marcil  
Mathysen  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)  
Motz  
Nater  
Nuttall  
Paul-Hus  
Plamondon  
Quach  
Ramsey  
Rayes  
Rempel  
Saganash  
Saroya  
Schmale  
Shipley  
Stanton  
Stetski  
Strahl  
Sweet  
Tilson  
Van Kesteren  
Vecchio  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Weir  
Yurdiga — 133

Kent  
Kusie  
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
Leitch  
Lloyd  
Lukiwski  
MacKenzie  
Malcolmson  
Masse (Windsor West)  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
Moore  
Nantel  
Nicholson  
O'Toole  
Pauzé  
Poilievre  
Raitt  
Rankin  
Reid  
Richards  
Sansoucy  
Scheer  
Shields  
Sopuck  
Ste-Marie  
Stewart  
Stubbs  
Thériault  
Trudel  
Van Loan  
Vielsen  
Warawa  
Webber  
Wong

## NAYS

### Members

Aldag  
Alleslev  
Anandasangaree  
Arya  
Badawey  
Bains  
Beech  
Bittle  
Boissonnault  
Bratina  
Brison  
Carr  
Chagger  
Chen  
Cuzner  
Damoff  
Dhaliwal  
Di Iorio  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Easter  
El-Khoury  
Erskine-Smith  
Eyolfson  
Fillmore  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fraser (West Nova)  
Freeland  
Garneau  
Goldsmith-Jones  
Gould  
Grewal  
Hardie  
Hébert  
Holland  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Jones  
Jowhari  
Khera  
Lametti  
Lapointe

Alghabra  
Amos  
Arseneault  
Ayoub  
Bagnell  
Baylis  
Bennett  
Blair  
Bossio  
Breton  
Caesar-Chavannes  
Casey (Charlottetown)  
Champagne  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
DeCoursey  
Dhillon  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
Ehsassi  
Ellis  
Eyking  
Fergus  
Finnigan  
Fonseca  
Fragiskatos  
Fraser (Central Nova)  
Fuhr  
Gerretsen  
Goodale  
Graham  
Hajdu  
Harvey  
Hogg  
Housefather  
Hutchings  
Joly  
Jordan  
Kang  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)

## Government Orders

Lebouthillier  
Leslie  
Lockhart  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
Maloney  
McCrimmon  
McKay  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
Mendès  
Mihychuk  
Soeurs  
Monsef  
Murray  
Nault  
Oliphant  
O'Regan  
Peschisolido  
Petitpas Taylor  
Poissant  
Ratansi  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Rota  
Ruimy  
Saini  
Samson  
Sarai  
Schieffe  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)  
Sikand  
Sohi  
Spengemann  
Tassi  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Whalen  
Wrzesnewskyj  
Young  
Lefebvre  
Lightbound  
Long  
Ludwig  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)  
McDonald  
McKenna  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
Mendicino  
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Morrissey  
Nassif  
O'Connell  
Oliver  
Ouellette  
Peterson  
Philpott  
Qualtrough  
Rioux  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Rudd  
Sahota  
Sajjan  
Sangha  
Scarpaleggia  
Schulte  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Simms  
Sorbara  
Tan  
Trudeau  
Vandenbeld  
Virani  
Wilson-Raybould  
Yip  
Zahid — 166

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare Motion No. 4 lost.

• (1525)

[English]

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting yes.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agree to apply and will be voting no.

[Translation]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote and votes yes.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote and vote no.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees to apply the vote and votes yes.

[English]

**Mr. Darshan Singh Kang:** Mr. Speaker, I will vote yes.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 441)*

## YEAS

## Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Benson
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hughes

Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Jolibois	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khera
Kwan	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Moore
Morrissey	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Ramsey
Rankin	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stetski	Stewart
Tan	Tassi
Trudeau	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Weir	Whalen
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid — 207	

## NAYS

## Members

Albrecht
Arnold
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bernier
Bezan
Block
Boudrias
Brown
Chong
Clement
Deltell
Dreeshen
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Finley
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Kelly

*Business of Supply*

Kent	Kitchen
Kusie	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Marcil
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Raitt	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Tilson
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga — 92

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

● (1530)

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, continuing my remarks, that is the kind of progress Canadians expect. We are very proud to have created growth that benefits everyone, not just the top 1%. This is another example and another reason the Conservatives are focused on the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner rather than the Canadian economy.

Our government is headed in the right direction. While the opposition continues to focus on other matters, and this matter in particular, which has officially been deemed closed, we will continue to invest in the middle class, in our communities, and in our economy. We will carry on with our plan to make life better and fairer for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution to the debate today as most Liberal members are shying away from speaking to this.

However, it goes back to this. Does the member not believe that all of us, particularly the highest leaders in the country, should respect the public trust? We may have legitimate debate over which

path we may take toward greater prosperity or greater fairness in our country, but does member not agree that we should all have the same values when it comes to the monies that are given to us to be spent with utmost of prudence?

The fact is that his leader was found guilty. He is the first prime minister in office to break a federal statute. Does the member not believe in the principle that if he is not justified in using those funds, he should pay them back, the same as the previous health minister did when she was caught utilizing funds for limousine services? Does the member not believe in that fundamental principle of the public trust?

**Mr. Peter Schiefke:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing the Prime Minister did was address Canadians directly. He went out there and answered questions from the media directly, speaking directly to Canadians. Following that, he went on a national tour and spoke with Canadians, answering questions on a wide range of topics, including this one.

The Prime Minister accepts the findings in the report issued, and he has taken full responsibility.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I definitely feel that an entire day debating this point is a lost opportunity. There are issues, frankly, on which I would like to take the Liberal government to task, and they are a wide number. Unfortunately, from my seat in this place, I do not have access to supply day motions. However, surely there are more critical issues. I note that when I did town hall meetings in my riding, no one raised this issue.

To focus on the matter at hand, would the hon. member agree with me that the Conflict of Interest Act should be strengthened? Often people who are on the procedure and House affairs committee relate my experience of finding that the advice from the Ethics Commissioner is entirely vague, the rules are unusual, and that the advice she gave to our current finance minister was clearly bad advice.

Could we not tighten up the rules and have enforcement mechanisms be part of our legislation, so we know exactly what the rules are, and abide by them or face the consequences?

**Mr. Peter Schiefke:** Mr. Speaker, I want share my hon. colleague's thoughts. When I go door to door and speak with my constituents, this is not among the issues of concern to them.

However, when we move forward year after year in the House, we look at areas where there could be room for some improvement. In this area with respect to the rules that govern the office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, I definitely think we can always improve. I look forward to working any member in the House who wants to look at those and possibly propose improvements, making it better, so we have better representation and are held more accountable by our constituents in various ridings.

**Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to follow up on the last question and the fact that many constituents are not focusing on this issue.

*Business of Supply*

One of the things that they are focusing on in Durham region, which my riding of Whitby is in, is the economy. Now we have an unemployment rate of 5.6% in that region. It has not been that way in 15 years.

Is my hon. colleague facing the same sort of questions at the door and commendation of our government's hard work?

• (1535)

**Mr. Peter Schiefke:** Mr. Speaker, I am experiencing the same thing at the doors in my community. However, there are some differences in the issues about which my constituents talk to me. The environment is a particular issue of concern. They want to ensure we continue our work of finding that delicate balance between economic growth and protecting our environment for future generations. I have assured them that I will be focusing on that and that it will be a priority for me moving forward.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today. All members in the House were elected by their constituents to represent them. I know I speak for all of us when I say we are proud to stand here and debate issues that are important to Canadians, issues such as jobs, security, and environmental issues, issues I hear from my constituents when I speak with them in the riding, as was mentioned by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands earlier today in this debate.

I find it unfortunate that instead of talking about these very important issues to grow the economy and create new sustainable jobs, the Conservative Party has decided to put partisan politics before Canadians and choose one of its few allotted days to discuss a topic for which the Prime Minister has repeatedly taken full responsibility. As the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands said, “a lost opportunity”.

Let me tell everyone the facts.

Immediately after the commissioner's report was tabled, the Prime Minister took full responsibility and accepted the findings. On top of this, the Prime Minister will continue to work with the commissioner and assure that all family and personal vacations will be cleared with the office of the commissioner.

It is also important to note that the commissioner stated that the Prime Minister did not take part in any decisions related to the aid foundation or give instructions to advance any projects in relation to that institution.

The commissioner's office does important work to ensure that members remain accountable and transparent and do not undertake actions that will give rise to conflict. Our government has always worked to ensure the commissioner's office and all officers of Parliament get the support and the resources they need to remain fully independent to do their work.

The commissioner has a tough job and is tasked with both interpreting and administering the Conflict of Interest Act. This includes providing public-office holders with confidential advice, investigating and reporting on alleged breaches, and levying penalties for public office-holders who have failed to report as required.

Our government has committed to ensuring that officers of Parliament, such as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, remain robust. It is part of the reason why we are putting in a new appointment process that supports open, transparent, and merit-based selection processes. The selection process is designed to identify highly qualified candidates who meet the needs of the organization and are able to perform the duties of the position to which they would be appointed. This new process will help strengthen the trust in our democracy and ensure the integrity of our public institutions. We thank all officers of Parliament for their work and the former commissioner for her outstanding service to Parliament and Canadians.

While the opposition members have tried their best to convince Canadians that the costs related to the security of the Prime Minister are somehow unusual, the fact is that the former commissioner acknowledged these costs would be incurred whenever the Prime Minister travelled. She stated, “If the Prime Minister had gone somewhere else on his own initiative...a lot of those costs would have been incurred anyway.”

Such security costs have also applied to previous prime ministers. Canada's security agencies make determinations on how best to ensure the safety of the Prime Minister, and their advice is followed.

Sadly, the discourse coming from the opposite side is trying to put partisan politics before the very real issues Canadians face every day. The opposition wants to know about paying back taxpayers. Let me tell everyone about how the government has been putting more money into the pockets of Canadian taxpayers.

Nine million Canadians have more money in their pockets thanks to the middle-class tax cut. We were able to lower taxes for the middle class by asking the wealthiest 1% to do a little more. On this side of the House, we know that when the middle class benefits, all Canadians benefit.

Nine out of 10 Canadian families are better off with the Canada child benefit. One of the main reasons I came into politics was to help the disadvantaged, those who cannot help themselves, those who for a short time in their lives face poverty or low income. Helping nine out of 10 Canadian families with children is a great boost and has not only helped those families and children have a better quality of life, but also it has been a huge boost to the economy, which is why there is such record employment.

This program offers a simple, monthly, and tax-free cheque to Canadian families that is more generous than what they received under the previous government.

• (1540)

We were able to put this program in place by doing two things: focusing the most benefits on those who need it most and less on those who need it less, and putting an end to the Conservative practice of sending child care cheques to millionaire families. This has made a real difference in the lives of Canadians from coast to coast, helping them afford more groceries, take care of expenses, and save for their future. We are able to accomplish these things because we remain focused on Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

Conservatives continue to focus on us, but it will not deter us from ensuring we continue our efforts passionately to create initiatives toward helping grow the middle class. By investing and putting our trust in Canadians, we earn the trust of Canadians. Canadians also trust the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, which operates above the political games we often find in this chamber. This is important because Canadians need to recognize when a statement is made factually, as is done by the commissioner, and when it is done for political gain, as does the opposition.

However, if the opposition wants to continue talking about giving back to taxpayers, it should know we are investing heavily in infrastructure to better support our communities, grow the economy, and create jobs. I have made a number of infrastructure announcements, and I am anticipating a lot more. We have close to economically defined full employment in my riding because of these advantages of not only infrastructure investments, but investing in the families I mentioned, in low-income students, and in seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement and the working income tax benefit. We talked about this at the all-party poverty caucus this morning, as well as ideas for even improving that. All these things have helped investment in the economy and are things that Canadians who are in need are really thinking about and looking for their government to deal with.

Canadians will benefit from such long overdue infrastructure funding. We already have seen investments in roads and transit to help connect rural and remote communities so that people and businesses can connect across our vast country. We have done a number of water projects, projects related to airports, wastewater systems, and many other projects related to infrastructure. Many pieces of infrastructure were left crumbling by a previous government, which focused on cuts and balancing the budget, no matter the cost.

We are focused on Canadians and the issues that matter to them. This is why we are investing in our communities from coast to coast to coast and ensuring the delivery of our priorities. Maybe I will say that again because quite often I just hear “coast to coast”. The biggest coastline in the world is the northern coast of Canada, the Arctic Ocean. Please, members of all parties and ministers, it is coast to coast to coast.

This helps explain why we are debating the motion in front of us today. The Conservatives know our plan to help grow the economy is working and, lacking other options, have decided to focus on the Prime Minister.

In closing, as the Prime Minister has said many times on the floor of the House, he has accepted the findings of the commissioner and has also accepted full responsibility. Let us move forward, focus on the real issues affecting Canadians, and work to improve the lives of all those living in our communities.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, many times throughout my colleague's comments, he talked about the Prime Minister accepting full responsibility. Every Canadian knows that accepting full responsibility for an illegal trip that cost taxpayers \$200,000 requires that the Prime Minister pay back that money that belongs to taxpayers.

How can he say he has accepted full responsibility until he actually pays back the money that is owing to Canadians?

• (1545)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I would caution the member about suggesting what every Canadian knows, when that is not exactly what the Ethics Commissioner, whose job it is to opine on these items, said. I find it intriguing that the Conservatives have, question after question, speaker after speaker, in the entire debate today, asked someone to pay back costs when they have not identified any costs other than security. If there are no costs to pay back, why do they keep asking for costs to be paid back?

As I outlined in my speech, security costs are covered for the Prime Minister wherever he would be.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been thinking about this for a long time and this motion is the opportunity to bring it forward.

When are we, as parliamentarians, going to get over the gotcha politics on some issues? I know there has to be opposition, but the point I want to make is this. I do not care whether it is Stephen Harper, Paul Martin, Jean Chrétien, or the current Prime Minister. As a country, we should be proud that those prime ministers were and are secure when travelling. There is one reason 24 Sussex has not been fixed up for three decades. It is because if any prime minister did, it would not matter which party, the other opposition parties would stand up and say, “Look at the millions they are wasting.”

Two Parliaments ago, cabinet ministers in the House were flying commercially when they should have been flying on the Challengers. The reason they were was the opposition parties. We would do the same if we were on that side. Any other country would ensure that their parliamentary secretaries or cabinet ministers could fly securely, that they could carry secure documents, and be proud of what they do for their country.

We somehow have to rethink this. This is a matter of security for the Prime Minister. I am not going to get into the Ethics Commissioner's report, but this is a matter of security for the Prime Minister and we are belittling ourselves by the way we deal with some of these issues.

The Prime Minister is flying around in an Airbus that is how old? I remember when Brian Mulroney bought that Airbus, for which he was attacked, so he did not change it to a more efficient aircraft, like a C Series Bombardier plane, that would have enabled us to fly proudly around the world. The Prime Minister knows the minute he does it, instead of advertising our products around the world and ensuring his own security, he would be attacked for doing it.

I am saying that we need think about this and what we are doing to our cabinet and to our country with the way we handle these issues.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member on a macro-scale and a micro-scale. On a macro-scale, I agree that all parties in the House, mine included, spend too much time on personnel issues, ethics issues, things that could be handled by committee, the number of chairs in an office, renovations. Canadians would be better served if we dealt with poverty, the environment, jobs, the disabled, etc. I offer that warning to all parties to respect the institution so that in the short time each of us is here, we are dealing with the things that make the most difference for Canadians.

On the micro-level, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands made a great speech this morning and said something I had not realized before. She said she did not need a couple of security people and was told she had to have them, so the security agencies determine what the security requirements are. Wherever the Prime Minister goes, there has to be security. It could be a far-off place. Had he done something different on this particular vacation, it could have cost more or less for security, depending on what he chose to do.

It is important that we recognize that and get on with dealing with the other issues that people bring up to each one of us as we go door to door.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I requested to join this particular debate because there are some troubling issues that are beginning to arise as a result of this discussion.

Before I continue, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the great member of Parliament for Brandon—Souris.

I want to address some of the comments made by the member for Malpeque. He was part of a government that proposed bringing in an ethics commissioner. He was here for the Airbus purchase by the former Mulroney government. It is always interesting to me that when people are in positions where they have the ability to say something, they do not until it is past their turn to do something about it. Better late than never, I guess.

The issue today though is not about security. The issue is fundamentally about our country and its expectations toward the public trust. When Liberal members, or anyone in this place, tries to conflate it with 24 Sussex Drive and the insufficiency there, or Challenger jets, or whether or not ministers should fly in business class or have a government jet, it is extraneous to the conversation here today because we are talking about the public trust and the standards that the Prime Minister sets for the country.

Those members in this place who were also members of the previous Parliament would know that in 2014 the Ethics Commissioner issued an advisory warning to all members on the acceptance of gifts. Some members have quoted from that document. Here is one of them. “Members are not allowed to accept any gift or benefit that might reasonably be seen to have been given to influence them. I remind you that the \$200 threshold at which acceptable gifts or benefits must be publicly declared”.

Here is another one. “If the person or entity offering the gift is seeking or is likely in the future to seek your support in the exercise of a duty or function of your office, then you must refuse it. This applies to all organizations, including non-profit and charitable organizations.” Here is one more for good measure. “You are

prohibited not only from accepting such gifts directly, but also indirectly.”

I remember this well. At the time that memo came out, as it happens, I received a mixed supply of vitamins from the natural supplement industry. It just came through the mail. I had no idea what the value was; however, in abundance of caution I sent them back, as I know many other members of Parliament did at the time.

Here is the thing. Back in 2014, the Prime Minister was, as we know, a member of that previous Parliament, meaning we know full well that he also received the same memo, and that memo was very clear on what constitutes and defines a gift, so the Prime Minister cannot possibly pretend he was unaware of what officially defined a conflict arising from a gift. Interestingly enough, we have not heard from the Prime Minister that he either was or was not aware of the definition of a conflict.

Instead, apparently if one claims that someone is a close personal friend, then it should be okay to receive gifts from that friend that would otherwise be declared in conflict, and more so when that friend just happens to be the head of a foundation that receives millions upon millions from Canadian taxpayers and is also registered with the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada. Does that seriously make sense? These are seriously well-known facts listed on government websites and those of independent officers of Parliament.

Here is where it gets more bizarre. We find out that the Prime Minister also brought along the president of the Liberal Party of Canada and another Liberal member of Parliament on this trip.

We are told this 394-acre private island is worth in excess of \$100 million. I only mention this of course to ask what the value of a private vacation of the level of opulence and extravagance as this would be. We do not know. What we do know is that it is well above the \$200 threshold required for disclosure under the act. There is not even a shadow of a doubt about that. The Prime Minister, Mr. “Sunshine is the greatest disinfectant”, did not disclose any of this to the conflict commissioner. It was a secret the Prime Minister was silent on until a reporter found out.

Here we are. Why is this troubling? It is troubling because of course the law has been broken by the Prime Minister.

● (1550)

Therefore, the question remains, what happens because of that? Ultimately, that is the purpose of this debate today. If members of this place are found guilty of receiving a benefit they were not entitled to legally receive, should they be able to keep that benefit, and more so if that benefit resulted in a cost to Canadian taxpayers?

We all know that if everyday Canadian citizens made a decision that resulted in their receiving government benefits they were not entitled to receive, not only would they have to repay those benefits, plus interest, but they could have their bank accounts seized or their wages garnisheed. I can tell members that there are single mothers who have had this very thing occur to them when it was ruled that they were not entitled to the Canada child benefit they received.



*Business of Supply*

Here is my question for this place. Why should this principle, which applies to everyday Canadians, not apply to the Prime Minister? Why is there one set of rules for the Prime Minister and another set of rules for everyone else? A Canadian is a Canadian, unless one is the prime minister and then apparently one should not be required to pay back illegal benefits the same way everyday Canadians are.

Keep in mind that no one forced the Prime Minister to take this trip. No one forced the Prime Minister to bring along the president of the Liberal Party of Canada. These were all choices by the Prime Minister. I would like to think that at least some in the Prime Minister's inner circle would have advised against taking this trip, but ultimately we know that the Prime Minister does not care. This is a Prime Minister who by his own actions demonstrates that he believes he should not be subject to the same rules as everyday Canadians.

Our last prime minister, by contrast, made changes to his own pension that were estimated to cost him personally over \$1 million. He did that because he was asking MPs and members of the public sector to make adjustments to their pensions, and that prime minister did not believe he should be above that.

More troubling, if this Prime Minister believes that he is subject to a different set of rules and that he should not have to repay the benefits that were illegal, which any other Canadian would be forced to repay, why, at a minimum, does he not come before this place and tell Canadians why that is? Why is the Prime Minister not here today being held accountable for his actions? To be clear, they were his actions. Why is he not defending his actions in front of other members?

Why is it that, when this question comes up in question period from the official leader of the opposition, more often than not the Prime Minister refuses to answer and simply hides behind his House leader? What kind of leader does that? The last one did not. Every time that I can recall, when the official leader of the opposition rose to ask questions, the previous prime minister rose to answer those questions, much as the previous prime minister did when the leader of the third party rose with questions. Of course, that is what a leader does. He or she answers questions from the leaders of the other parties, but this Prime Minister does not.

The Prime Minister chooses, as he fancies, to hide behind his House leader because, of course, he is above having to answer questions from other official party leaders when he does not like the questions. Why is that? It is all because he does not think he should have to repay the cost of something that he and his insider friends decided to illegally benefit from. Those were his choices, and now he hides from doing the right thing and repaying those expenses, or at the very least coming to this place and explaining to Canadians why he does not have to repay them the same way other Canadians would.

This is what troubles many of us. I know that there are many good people on the government side of the House who know the rules of this place and follow them. That is how we honourably represent the citizens of our areas and how we try to keep cynicism away from politics and maintain trust as much as possible.

Now, the Prime Minister has a choice: either repay the funds or at the very minimum come before this place and explain to Canadians why the rules that would impact them in such a situation should not apply.

There will come a day when we all look back at the time we spent in this place. Will the Liberal members think of the time they defended the Prime Minister's illegal vacation, which he was found to personally benefit from, as being what they would have been most proud of in their time here? I suspect we all know the answer to that.

• (1555)

I ask all members to send a message that all Canadians are equal when it comes to repaying taxpayer-provided benefits they were not eligible to receive in the first place.

• (1600)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for a number of days now we have heard the Conservatives push an issue for which we have had full compliance from the Prime Minister. He has indicated that he accepts the report. He has met with the former commissioner. Mary Dawson herself believes that the issue is in fact resolved.

Since the report has been out, the Prime Minister has been travelling the country, doing town halls, listening to Canadians, and answering the questions they pose. The issues that are consistently raised have to do with jobs and health care, issues that are real and that Canadians want to have dialogue on. However, the Conservatives are focused on something that has already been dealt with.

One of the member's colleagues had to go before the commissioner, and there was a report on that individual. The Prime Minister is not alone. All members of this House are subject to the rules of the commissioner. The Prime Minister is not the only one. There have been Conservatives, too.

Would my colleague agree that it is time we move on and start debating issues that are also important, such as the economy, jobs, and so much more?

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite is tired of these questions. I am tired of these questions. I cannot believe that I live in a country where we have to ask the leader of the country to show accountability.

The way this place works is that we put in place an ethics commissioner who does investigations to make sure that we are following the Conflict of Interest Act and the code of conduct for members of Parliament. However, once that report is tabled, the real penalty is political. Now we have the facts and we can have a debate. The member may not like the debate, or the fact that his leader has put the Liberals in a position where they are being held to account both by members of Parliament on this side and by their constituents. They may want to talk about the strengths of their government, but the way our system works, which he knows as a former opposition member, is that we like to talk about the weaknesses of the government.

*Business of Supply*

I was elected. I talk to people in my riding and I do town halls. They want to see some accountability. I want to see some accountability. The question is, does the member want to see some accountability from the Prime Minister?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I also want to thank the Conservatives for moving this motion.

It may not be the motion that we, in the NDP, would have moved as a priority, but it is true that this says a lot about and is symptomatic of the Liberals' attitudes, and especially the attitude of the Prime Minister.

They seem to think that they are above the law, above everyone else, and they are part of an elite that can do whatever they want.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on something very important. There is a lot of information here, but this situation is unprecedented. A sitting prime minister has never been found guilty of violating the act by an ethics commissioner. That is not insignificant. The Prime Minister is the only one in the history of this country to violate the Conflict of Interest Act while in office.

According to my colleague, what does the Prime Minister's attitude say about him?

[English]

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, first, as a Canadian, I hope that every single elected official treasures and acts prudently to maintain the public trust, because that is what people deserve.

Second, as the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, I want to make sure that we have the proper forum to hold the government to account when it fails, and it has clearly failed. This is the first Prime Minister who has violated a federal statute while in office.

Last, I feel bad for the Aga Khan, because the Prime Minister, in his rush to go on a fun-filled vacation with his family, has put a spiritual leader into disrepute with many Canadians. What they see is someone who is well connected. The Aga Khan has come to this place and has done many great things. The Prime Minister and his office have executed their duties in a bad fashion, which has reflected badly upon the Aga Khan. I feel bad for him and I offer my condolences to anyone who feels offended by that, because the Prime Minister, by his conduct, has put that spiritual leader in that state.

• (1605)

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a sad state of affairs when the Parliament of Canada has to debate a motion such as this one due to the actions of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister violated numerous sections of the Conflict of Interest Act, and Canadians want their money back.

As elected officials, we are expected to set the standard of high ethical behaviour. Is it really too much to ask that the Prime Minister repay hard-working taxpayers and be accountable for his lack of judgment? While Canadians know that elected officials are capable of making mistakes, they expect their leaders to own up when they are in breach of their solemn duties in the House.

A lot has been said today about the actions and behaviour of the Prime Minister, and the members opposite would clearly like to downplay this incident. I truly believe that if the Prime Minister had just come forward after the issue was brought to light and answered the most basic questions put in front of him by not only members of the opposition but the media and every Canadian, he could have saved himself a lot of grief and headaches.

While one might question the validity of the Prime Minister's arguments to Mary Dawson, there is no doubt, even taking his story at face value, that common sense would have said that the leader of our great country should not be taking free vacations from someone who interacts with the Government of Canada on official business.

No one is criticizing the Prime Minister for taking time to spend with his family. We all understand the gruelling schedules of elected representatives. I know how much time he has to be on the road travelling to all corners of the country. However, that is not the debate we are having here today.

The issue at hand is that the Prime Minister broke the law. He dragged this colossal mistake on for over a year, and in doing so, not only showed a side that many Canadians find unbecoming but stuck taxpayers with the tab for his illegal soiree in the Caribbean.

If this had been done by any others in the Prime Minister's cabinet, they would have been shown the door so quickly that their names would have been deleted from the Prime Minister's cabinet list within minutes, and by the next day, I would not be surprised if the PMO pretended not to even know them. They would have been ostracized and moved to the back corner of this chamber and would never again be associated with the government.

Let us ponder for a moment if this involved an individual in the public service. For example, a deputy minister or executive who took a free vacation under the exact same circumstances would immediately be shown the door, and the next day, when asked, every Liberal spokesperson would decry the actions of this individual and would promise to crack down on any incidents to ensure that this never happened again. However, because the individual in this circumstance happened to be their boss, not a word has been spoken to even remotely criticize or question his actions.

It would seem that, once again, our Conservative caucus is going to have to put in tougher rules on the ethical behaviour of the executive branch. Our dear Liberal friends have a habit of pushing the envelope and eroding the trust of Canadians in their elected officials. We do not have to go far back in time to see a prime example of how we had to clean up the mess of a previous Liberal administration that found creative ways to be entitled to their entitlements. It was our previous Conservative government that brought in the Federal Accountability Act to set new rules so that we would never experience the same level of mistrust and waste of taxpayers' money ever again.

It has been said by many, but it is worth repeating, that arrogance is the Liberals' kryptonite, and from what we have seen over these past few years, there is no evidence that they have turned the page from previous Liberal mishaps.

*Business of Supply*

No one here wants any elected official to go through this quagmire in which the Prime Minister seems to have found himself. Not only does he have the audacity to ignore pointed questions put to him, he believes that somehow he is the victim in all this.

Canadians deserve better than a Prime Minister who believes that there is one set of rules for Liberals and their friends and another set of rules for everyone else.

• (1610)

We have come a long way since the election of 2015. We went from lofty language espoused during the campaign about how the Liberals were going to change the way Ottawa worked to finding ourselves in this mess. The Liberal government was to be so transparent that it would have set a new standard for all governments to follow. I would not recommend that any government across the country replicate the actions of those who sit across from me today. In fact, I would not even recommend that a student council look to the current government as a good example of how to operate. From the obfuscation to the lack of answers, it is no wonder the Prime Minister's approval ratings are starting to mirror those of his finance minister. While some Liberal diehards still support him on this matter, I would argue that the Prime Minister and his actions fall very short of the behaviour Canadians expect from the individual who sits in the Prime Minister's chair.

Let it be said that today's debate has nothing to do with personal attacks or mudslinging, or whatever word the Liberal House leader has decided to use this week. If the opposition cannot question the government, it is a slippery slope that no one in this chamber would welcome.

I would urge all Liberal members to demand more from their leader. Their constituents certainly do. I would urge Liberal members to call on the Prime Minister to pay back the hundreds of thousands of dollars taxpayers had to fork out for his illegal Caribbean getaway. I would urge them to demand that the Prime Minister answer all questions put to him in this House and that he stop making excuses for his questionable judgment. Spending \$200,000 of taxpayers' money on this illegal vacation does not pass the smell test.

The list of unethical behaviour by the government continues to grow. Ministers and Liberal operatives have been caught wasting money left, right, and centre, and the Prime Minister is losing credibility each and every day. From spending \$1 million to renovate a cabinet minister's office to wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars to design a budget cover, the litany of Liberal largesse knows no bounds.

I call on all members to vote in favour of this motion. The Prime Minister should cough up the money he spent on his illegal holiday and apologize profusely for his actions. While our deficits and debts grow by the day, and the Liberals nickel and dime taxpayers, they are pushing the patience of Canadians. The time has come to end this chapter and bring a close to these terrible, unethical lapses. When will he finally act the part of a responsible person and pay back the cost of his illegal travel?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will reinforce the fact that the Prime Minister was exceptionally co-operative with the commissioner. We have accepted

the report and have gone even further than the report. Since the report, the Prime Minister has been on a tour of town halls, including in our home province of Manitoba, where people have been raising what they believe are important issues, which are important. They deal with things like jobs, health care, the economy overall, our environment, and lots of important issues that need to be debated.

It is almost as if the Conservatives had an awakening. It is as if it was the first time the commissioner ever had to make a ruling on a member of Parliament. That is not the case. The commissioner had to take corrective action on some Conservative cabinet ministers. The commissioner herself provided her thoughts on the issue to the Prime Minister and the government as a whole, and the Prime Minister has accepted them.

It is time the Conservative Party recognized the important issues of Canadians. Conservatives keep repeating, "Pay back, pack back." Surely to goodness they recognize that when the Prime Minister travels somewhere, security needs to be provided, and there is a cost for that security. There are people around the world who would like to harm the Prime Minister of Canada. Security is not optional. It is important for all prime ministers.

• (1615)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the Prime Minister broke the law. The Ethics Commissioner found him guilty of contravening four different sections of the Conflict of Interest Act.

The member across the way can obfuscate all he wants, but he knows that we put in the Federal Accountability Act to try to prevent this sort of thing. It was not just another member of the House, who, as I said, would be gone in a minute. It was the Prime Minister who contravened all these acts. He broke the law, and that is the bottom line.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I find it funny to hear Liberal members say that this is not an important issue.

It is important to understand that the issue is not just about the vacations on the Aga Khan's island. The issue is whether the Prime Minister has good judgment. There have been several incidents, particularly the cash for access fundraisers, the visit of the Aga Khan, and several bills where the government ignored what it had campaigned on. The number of incidents that have people convinced that the Prime Minister lacks judgment keeps on growing. This is particularly concerning.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to know if my colleague thinks that determining whether the Prime Minister has good judgment is an important issue. When I hear him say that there is not enough money for veterans, I have serious doubts about his judgment. Unfortunately, some people in my riding, perhaps even some who wanted to vote for the Liberal Party, are wondering what is going on.

Does my colleague also think that this is a much larger issue than the vacations on the Aga Khan's island? Does he think that the Prime Minister's ability to exercise judgment and the trust that Canadians place in the Prime Minister to do his job are a part of it?

[English]

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, because of his actions, of course I do not believe that the Prime Minister has good judgment. It is very profound that the Prime Minister thinks he is the only one who needs to not pay the \$200,000 back. As I said earlier, if any of his colleagues had done that, they would be gone.

My colleague mentioned the comments at one of the Prime Minister's great town hall meetings the other day. Veterans have given, in some cases, as much as they possibly could, suffering severe injury and mental stress. The Prime Minister said that they are asking for too much and that he cannot help them anymore.

There seems to me to be a clear lack of judgment in regard to the important issues for Canadians. To answer my colleague's question, it is very clear that the Prime Minister has lost his reputation, if he had one, in regard to being able to carry out, on a daily basis, the concerns of this country. He will not even acknowledge that he had an illegal holiday or pay back the \$200,000 cost of it.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I just want to say that I will be sharing my time with the wonderful member of Parliament for Essex. I want to thank her for her hard work on fair trade and workers' rights.

[Translation]

It is not often that we have the opportunity to say it, and I am very happy to do so.

Today I am taking the floor to talk about the Conservative Party's motion regarding the actions of the Prime Minister in a scandal we have all heard about and that occurred before the Holidays, when the Ethics Commissioner tabled her final report. I will get back to that.

As my colleague was saying, this is part of a somewhat larger picture, that is, the Prime Minister's judgment and the confidence he inspires in Canadians. A little more than two years ago, the Liberal party made a big deal about renewing confidence in the country's institutions and leaders. It announced that it would do politics differently, that it would work for real people and for the middle class, and that it would not work for the elite. The decisions that the Liberals have taken since then, however, do not track with their nice words and pretty speeches. More often than not, the government's speeches and actions could not be further apart.

Instead of renewing confidence in our institutions, the Liberals have broken promise after promise, not only in matters of ethics, but also concerning other subjects of concern to most Canadians and

Quebeckers. I could go on and on about their broken promise on electoral reform.

The Prime Minister told us, hand on heart, that he would institute electoral reform no matter how difficult the job. Then, he claimed that there was no consensus, while all of the evidence pointed to the contrary. That does not make it easy for Canadians to believe politicians. It only increases their cynicism toward our democratic institutions.

The same goes for the broken promise concerning tax loopholes. A CEO earns a lot of money every year and, in addition, he can take advantage of loopholes to avoid paying income tax, while ordinary employees have no choice but to pay. We lose \$800 million a year because of a loophole related to stock options. It was undeniably part of the Liberal Party's electoral platform. People believed it. They wanted to think that the Liberal government would do something about it, but no, the Liberals broke their promise, and CEOs will be allowed to continue not paying the taxes they owe.

Being the new environment critic, I have to say that, as progressives and environmentalists, New Democrats were deeply disappointed. We were told that the government would take environmental issues seriously, that the dark days of the Harper era were behind us, that Canada would finally play a leading role on the world stage. However, this government's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets are exactly the same as its predecessor's. Nothing has changed. The targets are the same and the plan is the same. Everyone watching the government knows we will not even reach those low targets with the measures currently in place. Environmental groups are not the only ones saying it. The OECD has called Canada out for not doing enough. It said we are going to miss our targets and we are not doing our fair share. That is extremely worrisome.

The Liberals also told us they would do away with oil company subsidies. These companies do not need government money; they make enough of their own. The people of Quebec and Canada have been giving oil companies \$1.6 billion a year. Just like with the previous government, absolutely nothing has changed and this is another broken promise.

Now let us turn to the Prime Minister's trip to the island owned by his billionaire friend, the Aga Khan. I say "friend" because I was tickled by the part in the commissioner's report that said it was a little hard to call someone a person has not seen in 30 years a friend. That is a pretty accommodating definition of the word "friend".

**An hon. member:** Maybe they are Facebook friends.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Sure, Mr. Speaker, maybe they are Facebook friends. Maybe what we lack is a definition.

*Business of Supply*

•(1620)

This speaks volumes about the arrogance of the Liberals and the Prime Minister. Once again, he gives the impression that he thinks he is above the law, that this is of no concern to him, and that it is normal, in his universe, to accept such gifts and invitations. He talks a lot about the middle class, but he has never been part of it. He has no idea what the middle class is.

Most of our constituents would not think it is normal for a billionaire to offer them a free trip to his private island. That may be part of the everyday lives of the rich and famous, but unfortunately for the Prime Minister, it ended up being more of a Gilligan's Island for him.

When journalists and opposition parties started asking questions, we really did not know what the Prime Minister's agenda was. He did not explain where he had been or why right away. The Liberals tried to bury and cover up this whole affair, knowing very well that it would not go over well with Canadians.

When the government was forced to admit that the Prime Minister had received a gift in the form of the trip in question, the excuse was that it was a family vacation and that the Prime Minister had the right to take family vacations like anyone else. That makes sense. Most ministers and members of the House also vacation with their children and spouse. That is fine.

However, an interesting little detail was left out. In fact, this family trip was spent in the company of an MP from the Liberal Party of Canada and the president of the Liberal Party of Canada. I have to say that, as much as I like my colleagues, I am not going to bring the hon. member for Essex or the president of the NDP with me on my family vacations. That is family time.

We then learned that he had accepted to travel on his billionaire friend's private helicopter. Guess what? That is against the rules. Ministers and prime ministers are not allowed to do that especially when there are other, more conventional means of getting to the island.

The funny thing is that, at a certain point, the contention was that the only way to get to the island was by private helicopter, but a technician accompanying the Prime Minister travelled aboard a regular airplane. They could not get their story straight there, either.

It is a rare occurrence in family vacations that the host has business and government relations with the state his guest represents.

In light of all the secrecy, half-truths and all-out illegal acts, the Ethics Commissioner conducted an investigation and, for the first time in the history of Canada, a sitting Prime Minister was found guilty of contravening the Conflict of Interest Act, not only once, but four times. Sections 5, 11, 12 and 21 of the Conflict of Interest Act were violated. This is of great concern.

The Prime Minister also seems to think that apologizing, saying sorry and promising not to do it again should be the end of it. The fact is that people see a lack of judgment on the Prime Minister's part, a disregard for his promise to do politics differently and not to place himself in conflicts of interest.

I agree that the Prime Minister should reimburse Canadian taxpayers for what he owes them. We in the NDP want to take it one step further because, without changes to the law, this type of behaviour could repeat itself. There must be more serious consequences than the small slap on the wrist we saw. We in the NDP believe that, when an investigation reveals that any section of the act has been violated, the commissioner should have the authority to impose financial penalties. The penalty could be a fine, dismissal or suspension.

We should start by taking the problem seriously. Legislative changes should be proposed to ensure that the consequences of such contraventions of the Conflict of Interest Act consist of more than a minor moral or public sanction. We should reinforce the commissioner's investigative powers and allow him or her to impose fines and financial or economic sanctions. The Prime Minister would have deserved no less in the case at hand.

•(1625)

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member suggested that monies be paid back. I was wondering if he could speak to the \$122,000 that the hon. member owes. The Prime Minister took immediate responsibility, listened to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, and abided by all of her recommendations. Could the member talk about the status of the money he owes?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question, even though he is trying to derail the debate and the discussion. When a committee comprised of mostly Liberal and Conservative members comes to a decision and gangs up on the NDP to make it look bad, most people come to realize that it is nothing more than political posturing and that it has nothing to do with the law having been broken. No independent investigation has been conducted in this matter. I can assure my colleague right now that I am not at all concerned.

However, I would like to know if he wants to strengthen the Conflict of Interest Act in order to avoid his Prime Minister landing in hot water, as he has been these last few months. Does he agree that the commissioner should have the power to impose real fines and other sanctions and that the public should be able to lodge complaints directly with him? Does he agree that the post-employment rules should be tightened, that the threshold for reporting donations should be reduced, and that the definition of public office holder should be extended to include the appointment of other individuals? These are practical solutions that the NDP is proposing in order to restore Canadians' confidence.

•(1630)

[English]

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Prime Minister has no intention of paying the money back. If other members of Parliament fall into a similar role where they have misspent taxpayers' money, has a precedent now been set that, because the Prime Minister has no intention of paying it back, no one can?

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I understand the point he is making given the circumstances. A bad example has been set by the highest official in the House. The Prime Minister himself broke the law and washed his hands of it. He does not want to change the law to give it more teeth and the commissioner more powers. Furthermore, he is showing contempt for taxpayers by refusing to do his part even though he could do so.

The NDP is concerned that the Prime Minister broke the law. We would also like to see more substantial legislative changes to prevent this from happening in the future, whether it involves ministers, the prime minister, or any member of the House, in order to restore confidence in our institutions.

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, would it have been helpful for the commissioner to have had the authority to require the direct repayment of the expenses and to levy fines in the case of an inappropriate or illegal act?

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I think that having fines for illegal actions is common sense. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to reimburse taxpayers who were cheated because of the Prime Minister's poor judgment and the decision he made. In fact, this dovetails nicely with what I said before. It would prevent this type of totally inappropriate and arrogant incident from happening again.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** We have enough time for a 30-second question. The hon. member for Montcalm has the floor.

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in thirty seconds, I will say that the Bloc Québécois fully supports amending the Conflict of Interest Act because what the Liberal MPs have been telling us today is that every member of the House can violate the Conflict of Interest Act at least once without any consequences.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for his comment. I would like to remind members that, when it comes to conflicts of interest, the Minister of Finance was also caught red-handed because he forgot to disclose that he owns a villa in France. That is not something that would happen to most people. The finance minister is also under investigation for a potential conflict of interest surrounding Bill C-27, which is a direct attack on defined benefit pension plans. Let us not forget that the finance minister's own company manages pension plans. I look forward to seeing the end of this investigation into this other Liberal scandal.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** 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 Calgary Midnapore, Taxation; the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Status of Women.

[English]

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP supports this motion, but we have to understand that this motion needs to be more than just a political stunt. There actually needs to be some change that happens in this House when we guide ourselves.

I definitely agree that the Prime Minister's violation of the Conflict of Interest Act is unacceptable, but this has to be more than just an attempt to have the Prime Minister pay back the money. It needs to go further. It needs to reach further to make sure that we are implementing some changes for every member who sits in this House today.

The Conservative motion would impose this penalty on the specific case of the Prime Minister, but it would still leave the actual statutory penalties of the Conflict of Interest Act completely ineffective. New Democrats believe that if a motion or a bill is brought into the House or committee, there should be substantial ideas and reforms that would improve the institutions in which we work and which we all abide by.

When the Liberals were elected in 2015, they came in with their sunny ways. Their Prime Minister clearly put forward "Open and Accountable Government 2015", a guide which sets out core principles regarding the rules and responsibilities of ministers in Canada's system of responsible parliamentary government. I have to say that Canadians were hopeful when they saw this document. They felt this was a signal that things were going to be different, and yet here we are, more than two years later, and Canadians who were hopeful have been seriously let down by the Liberal government.

The principle that was put forward states that public officeholders have an obligation to perform their official duties and arrange their private affairs in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny, an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law. Those were some really lofty words that sounded incredibly hopeful, that sounded like there was going to be a change inside of government, inside this House. Sadly, it is not binding. Clearly, it is not of interest to the Prime Minister himself or to his fellow cabinet ministers, like the Minister of Finance. I am going to talk a little about the Minister of Finance.

The non-recusal of the Minister of Finance from consideration of Bill C-27 may not be seen as a problem for the government, but it is a huge conflict for Canadians. In particular, pensioners are very worried.

People and retirees in my riding have contacted me because they are worried about the changes to their pension plans. It is important to note that for working people, which I was before I came to this chamber, pensions are deferred wages. Pensions are not something that a company just gives people to hopefully live their retirement life in dignity. People contribute to their own pension, based on every hour that they have worked in the workplace, through an agreement with their employer. People work their entire lives for these pensions and they count on them to support them in their later years.

Now we have Bill C-27 which threatens public pensions. We know that when it starts with public pensions, it will soon move over to private pensions. Certainly the finance minister stands to benefit from this, from Morneau Shepell and its involvement in all of these pension plans. We have seen this play out unfortunately with Sears workers in our country right now.

*Business of Supply*

There are many dangers to Bill C-27. This shamefully removes the legal obligation, allowing for the conversion of defined benefit plans to targeted benefit plans, which could potentially lower benefits for both current and future retirees.

I want everyone in this House to think for a moment that if they retire, if they have worked 30 years at a workplace and then retire, knowing that they are going to receive a set amount every month, their decision to retire will actually hinge on whether or not they can afford to live on that amount per month.

For people who are already retired, they could now be contacted by those running the pension plan for the company which they previously worked for and could be told that the amount of the pension is going to be reduced because the company is not doing as well as it had hoped. Essentially seniors could be put in precarious situations after the implementation of Bill C-27.

Our pension legislation in Canada is designed to protect plan members from employers simply abandoning their commitments to them after years of hard work and walking away from their pension obligations. In Bill C-27, the government is proposing to withdraw that legal protection, leaving employees at the mercy of employers who now want to back out of those pension commitments that they made to the workers years and years ago.

•(1635)

This is an attack on the retirement security of all workers and retirees and could undermine the stability of workplace relations and fuel labour disputes in our country. This is very serious, and our Prime Minister and finance minister have shown absolutely no remorse. Our finance minister is quite content to leave Bill C-27 sitting on the table as a constant threat and reminder to working people in our country that they could lose their retirement as they see it right now. This is not a government that is standing up for working people.

The NDP stands up for retirees and working people and has legislation on the table right now to protect workers in insolvency. However, we will not stop until Bill C-27 is removed from the House. It is not good enough to let it sit and languish. I get that it is good enough for the finance minister, because he stands to personally gain from the bill, and, as has been mentioned in the House many times, has potentially already gained from Bill C-27.

This is very serious. Our Prime Minister and our finance minister cannot see past their own privilege. I see that disconnect daily in the House. It is something that is palpable here. When the Prime Minister is speaking about working people and the middle class, it is very clear to me that he does not know anyone, or have someone in his family, who is a member of the working class, the middle class, people who are out there working hard every day and struggling.

I am not surprised that this level of disconnect has led to this type of motion today where there is an attempt to force the Prime Minister to do the right thing. The Prime Minister himself sees nothing wrong with private vacations on islands, and the finance minister sees nothing wrong with legislation that could potentially benefit his family business. This is a very serious problem.

They cannot seem to recognize the wealth they have, and they are using it as an excuse for this ethical breach. To say, as my colleague

referred to earlier, that they are friends with someone they have seen twice in the last 15 years, so of course they accepted a private invitation to their island made me laugh. We do not typically bring everyone along with us on a vacation that we are being gifted from someone. For those of us who travel with our families, we are often all together in one small room, and we certainly would not invite another member of Parliament and their spouse. We would not invite the leader of our party. It is simply not feasible. However, to the Prime Minister, this seems as though it was nothing and he had done nothing wrong. That is the root of why we are discussing this here today.

There are some things that the New Democrats feel strongly we could do that would help to end this kind of abuse of privilege. The NDP is the only party in the House that is talking about real substantial reforms. If we are going to make some real advancements, we need to reform the act and give it teeth. We believe that the commissioner should be empowered to impose a penalty where an examination results in the finding of a contravention of any part of the act, which could include financial penalties, removal from a position, suspension from voting on issues for 30 days, or permanent refusal on specific issues.

The other thing is that we think the commissioner needs the power to give real fines and other punishments, including suspension. This is to allow the public to complain to the commissioner, to tighten the post-employment rules, reduce the gift disclosure threshold, and expand the definition of the public office holder to include Governor in Council appointments. To submit indirectly held assets to the same rules and scrutiny as directly held assets is among some of the reforms that the New Democrats are bringing forward today in the House.

We believe that the PM could easily pay this amount. Why he has chosen not to is beyond me. He certainly has the kind of money to be able to reach into his pocket, pull it out, and make sure he is returning the money to taxpayers. However, what we see, unfortunately, is a theme, and it is continuing on from previous Liberal and Conservative governments. It is that these scandals and ethical breaches are accepted.

We have the first sitting prime minister to be in violation of this statute, and I can promise that Canadians across the country are talking about this issue. They are saying that the Prime Minister is completely out of touch with Canadians, and they are looking to those in the House to hold him to account.

•(1640)

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in putting down the Prime Minister, the member built herself up as a member of the working class, which is impressive, making \$180,000 per year.

That being said, I am wondering if the hon. member could comment on the fact that the former conflict of interest and ethics commissioner was specifically asked if she saw the need for greater penalties in the legislation, and she said no. Why do New Democrats know better than Mary Dawson?

*Business of Supply*

• (1645)

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I was not putting down the Prime Minister; I was simply pointing out my observation, and the observation of Canadians of the Prime Minister. Having worked for 20 years in an auto manufacturing plant, building F-150 and Mustang engines for Ford Motor Company, I am a working-class person. However, I recognize the privilege I have standing in this House today, and I bring my voice because I have been elected to do so. I bring that voice to bring the experience of Canadians and what I am hearing in my riding of Essex, something I am boggled that the member opposite is not hearing in his riding. Canadians are tired of the sense of entitlement and of one set of rules for the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister and another set for Canadians.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for great recommendations about what we might do. I want to ask her what she thinks of the fact that the former minister of health, when caught doing something against the rules, paid back the money in an appropriate way. The minister of indigenous affairs in the north did the same. It seems like the women in the Liberal Party have a certain standard and that apparently the Prime Minister is not held to the same standard. Where is the gender parity there?

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is entirely feminist of our Prime Minister to have women pay back amounts they have been found to have taken when he will not do the same. As I mentioned earlier, we know that the Prime Minister comes from extreme wealth, with a trust fund and family money. The member opposite mentioned the amount of money that MPs make in this House. I would like to point out that the Prime Minister makes double the amount that MPs make. That is all posted publicly, for those who would like to see.

The question is why the Prime Minister will not simply pay this back. I have had this conversation with my colleagues and with constituents, and it seems as though the Prime Minister has dug in his heels. At this point, he will not backtrack and admit he has made a mistake, that he should pay back the money and be accountable to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are saying that we need to respect the institution, as though the Conflict of Interest Act is not part of the institution and as though violating that act is not an attack on the institution.

The Liberals are trying to derail the debate on the Prime Minister's supposed lack of judgment in accepting the vacations. In fact, they are telling us that voters are not interested in this issue or that they are interested in other things.

I think that is unacceptable coming from a government that claimed to want to do politics differently. Voters are cynical about the institution, Parliament, and all elected officials because they think that, once people get elected, they no longer respect the institution and, by extension, they no longer respect Canadians. That is exactly what the Prime Minister did.

Before we even get into talking about consequences or restitution, it is important to note that he demonstrated a lack of judgment unworthy of his position. Would he ever have told us during the

election in a leadership debate that, if he ever violated the Conflict of Interest Act, all he would do is apologize and we would move on to something else? How can my colleague explain the Prime Minister's lack of judgment?

[*English*]

**Ms. Tracey Ramsey:** Mr. Speaker, this is part of the broader issue. I have sat as an MP for just over two years. I understand that this is unacceptable and not something we are able to do, because I understand the rules. The Prime Minister has sat as a member in this House for quite some time, and he certainly should have known better. The fact that he accepted this begs the question about how well he understands the rules that govern us here. Unfortunately, I do not believe this will be the last time we find ourselves discussing the actions of the Prime Minister, because clearly his judgment is skewed when it comes to ethics.

• (1650)

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Lethbridge.

This is a difficult subject to speak about. We are spending the day talking about something that strikes at the very heart of Canadian values, of ethics, integrity, and accountability.

I will say right off that I am not a big fan of the Prime Minister. I am not a big fan of his policies. I am not a big fan of the debt and deficit, and all of the other things that go on. I certainly do not want to make this personal, but this strikes again at the heart of the Prime Minister's ethical standards, and the ethical standards of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Just over a year ago, the Prime Minister accepted a trip to the Aga Khan's island, and it was kept secret. Nobody knew about it except an inner circle within the Prime Minister's Office, and, as we found out later, some within the Privy Council Office, that this trip was being planned. It was not a trip that one could find on Expedia. It was not a trip that the Trivago guy could help one find for cheap. This was a trip to a registered lobbyist's island.

We have heard throughout the day some of my colleagues talk about the Aga Khan and the good work he does, and this is not to impugn him, his name, or his organization. It was the Prime Minister who put the Aga Khan in this position.

Why was the trip kept secret? It was because the Prime Minister knew it was wrong. Those around him in the Prime Minister's Office knew it was wrong, and those within the Privy Council knew it was wrong, but he did it anyway. He went on that trip. The challenge we have before us today is that we are going to spend a whole day talking about this, something that should never have happened.



*Business of Supply*

This is a hallowed place. It is a place that I certainly revere for its history and for those who have come before us. However, I think most of us can agree, in any other workplace if this situation were to happen, the prime minister in that case would have been fired from his job. This would have been a fireable offence. However, we cannot fire the Prime Minister, as only the Canadian electorate can do that. What do we do as an opposition? What we do as a third party? We hold the government to account.

This is a government that ran on an issue of real change. The Liberals said they were going to be more accountable. They said they were going to be transparent. They said they were going to be different. Yet, we have a Prime Minister who clearly broke federal ethics laws within the first year of being in office. Why? It is because of the sense of entitlement that he has. It is the fact that he thinks he is better than everyone else in this place, and better than any other Canadian in this country. He feels that he can go around like the king of Canada and accept all of these things. How is this any different from accepting a brown envelope with \$200,000?

I will remind members again that the Aga Khan is a registered lobbyist. If any other member of this place accepted what the Prime Minister accepted, we would be held to the same account, but he did not take responsibility. In spite of what government members are saying, that he has accepted responsibility, we have not heard any acceptance of responsibility because he does not think he did anything wrong. If that were the case and he thought he did anything wrong, he would pay the \$200,000 that this trip cost back to taxpayers because he was found guilty.

● (1655)

I have listened to the debate today and Liberals talked about security costs. Nobody is questioning the extent of security that the Prime Minister requires when travelling on business. Nobody is questioning that. What Conservatives are questioning is the fact that the Prime Minister accepted an illegal trip that he ought to have known not to take. That is what cost taxpayers money and that is what we are asking be paid back.

There is a clear distinction between what his official duties are as Prime Minister and what the security requirements are as Prime Minister as opposed to accepting an illegal trip that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner found to be illegal. It was not the opposition party that found that. It was not the third party. It was an independent officer of Parliament. That is why this is so important. If it were any other Canadian in any other place, workplace or otherwise, the expectation would be that he or she would pay this back. I do not think it is too much to ask of the Prime Minister to do that.

I say again that this is about not only respecting the institution of Parliament but respecting Canadians. Liberals were the ones who said they were going to do things differently, so I do not think it is too much to ask, as a member of the opposition, for the Prime Minister to pay that money back.

After the Ethics Commissioner found, back in December, just before Christmas, that the Prime Minister was in violation of four federal ethics laws, over the course of the next month and a half the opposition did not have an opportunity to question the Prime Minister. Since the House resumed, we have spent the majority of

time in question period asking the Prime Minister, on behalf of Canadians, why he did it and why he is not paying the money back.

We have heard the same tired lines over and over again, that they accept responsibility and that they are going to follow the recommendations of the Ethics Commissioner. They were not recommendations. They were findings of guilt, and as a result of the findings of guilt, we, as the opposition, are asking the Prime Minister to pay that money back. Why is the Prime Minister not doing it? It would absolutely be the right thing to do. The Ethics Commissioner has no mandate to issue any fine or require the Prime Minister to pay the money back. Therefore, Conservatives are saying that it is up to the Prime Minister to pay that money back. It is his obligation to pay that money back.

The Ethics Commissioner also talked about the relationship with the Aga Khan and the fact that this relationship had not been renewed in 30 years. The Prime Minister stated that he was a friend of the family. Clearly, the Ethics Commissioner found that not to be true. There are a couple of members on the other side who I went to high school with, the science minister and the member for New Brunswick Southwest, and I would hardly classify them as friends. They are acquaintances from high school. It does not mean that I would use that as an example of friendship. I had not seen them in 30 years, until we were elected to this place. The same holds true for the Prime Minister with respect to the Aga Khan.

There are multitudes of problems with this issue and all we are asking, as the opposition, is that those findings be dealt with with integrity and accountability, the very things the Prime Minister and the Liberal government ran on, and to step up and pay taxpayers back for this illegal trip. I do not think that is an unreasonable request. That request is quite appropriate under these circumstances. We are asking the Prime Minister to step up, make amends for the findings of the Ethics Commissioner, the fact that he was found to have taken an illegal trip, have some integrity, and pay that money back.

● (1700)

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the former conflict of interest and ethics commissioner was asked whether more stringent penalties should be imposed, she said, "I'm not of the view that more stringent penalties are required." It seems that the NDP and the Conservatives purport to have respect for the integrity commissioner except for the recommendations that she requires.

I have previously asked my question of a few members and no one has answered it. Could the hon. member point to the time when Peter MacKay was caught taking a military helicopter to a private fishing lodge at a cost of \$32,000 per hour?

**An hon. member:** A search and rescue helicopter.

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, it was a search and rescue helicopter. Could the member point to the time when he condemned that and called it out and demanded that Peter MacKay pay that money back?

**Mr. John Brassard:** They are going down the rabbit hole again, Mr. Speaker. I have heard that all day.

*Business of Supply*

I guess the member was not listening to my speech. The Prime Minister during the last election offered real change, offered to be better, offered better accountability, better transparency, and better integrity.

He is the first Prime Minister in the history of this country to be found guilty of ethics violations. Every member in this place understands their obligation when it comes to following the ethics rules and guidelines set out by the Ethics Commissioner and by Parliament. We follow those rules. The Prime Minister should have known better.

The member for St. Catharines should be asking these questions of his Prime Minister. Why did he do this? Why did he embarrass us? Why did he embarrass Canadians? Why was he the first Prime Minister in the history of this country to be found guilty? The member for St. Catharines should be asking his Prime Minister to pay the money back.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I, like the member for Essex, have been in the House for two years. When I heard of this incident I immediately knew that we cannot accept travel over \$200 and that we cannot accept anything from a lobbyist. It is clear that the Prime Minister should have known better and he had a total lack of judgment.

It is even worse than that, because we do not just get up one day and zoom off in a helicopter to a private island. That means both Gerald Butts and Katie Telford had a total lack of judgment. That means the Minister of Veterans Affairs had a total lack of judgment.

Would the member not agree that there is a huge issue that is rife on the opposite side of the House?

**Mr. John Brassard:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague just hit the nail on the head. The Liberal government has this sense of entitlement and we saw it certainly in Ontario. A lot of what happened in Ontario has transferred here to Ottawa. I guess it speaks to the core issue that one should know better, but that internal constitution does not exist on the other side.

The Liberals cannot help themselves. The Prime Minister cannot help himself. Gerald Butts, Katie Telford, all of the Prime Minister's advisers cannot help themselves. A champagne and caviar lifestyle on the taxpayer dime is something they are becoming quickly accustomed to and this is why we must expose this by having days like this.

Hopefully, by the time the next election rolls around, Canadians will have realized that there is only one party that truly looks after Canadian taxpayers and that is our Conservative Party of Canada, led by our leader the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

**Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister took taxpayers' money to the tune of \$200,000 to be exact. He took this money and used it in order to help pay for his illegal vacation to a Caribbean island. Today, believe it or not, we are debating whether or not the Prime Minister should now accept responsibility for his illegal conduct and pay back the money that he stole from Canadians. It seems ridiculous, does it not? We are spending an entire day debating whether or not the leader of our country should function with integrity, accept responsibility for his

illegitimate actions, and pay back money that he wrongfully took from Canadians. How has it come to this?

In 2016, the Prime Minister accepted an illegal gift of an all expenses paid vacation to a private tropical island from the Aga Khan, who I might add, is someone who receives millions of dollars in government grants and contributions from the government. I should also mention that he is a registered lobbyist.

The Prime Minister was caught and the Ethics Commissioner conducted an investigation. For the first time in Canadian history, a Prime Minister was found guilty of having broken the Conflict of Interest Act, not once but four times. He is guilty of accepting gifts that could influence decision-making. He is guilty of not recusing himself from discussions that could further private interests. He is guilty of failing to arrange his private affairs to avoid the situation. He is guilty of accepting travel on a non-commercial aircraft. To date, the Prime Minister has refused to accept full responsibility for his actions. I acknowledge that he offered a half-hearted verbal apology, but to make amends, the \$200,000 that he wrongfully took from taxpayers in this country to help cover the cost of his vacation must be paid back if he is truly sorry.

If the Prime Minister had simply followed the very clear rules set out in the Conflict of Interest Act, taxpayers would not have been stuck with the bill to begin with. Not once did we see even a hint of entitlement in the former prime minister. Stephen Harper paid back the Canadian taxpayer every single month for the food bill that was incurred at 24 Sussex, something that he did not need to do, but he chose to do because of his level of integrity. Stephen Harper paid for his family's child care costs out of his own pocket, again something he did not need to do, but he chose to do it because he felt that it was the right thing to do. Stephen Harper took his winter vacations at his family home in Calgary, which he paid for with his money, and his summer vacation at the Prime Minister's residence in Harrington Lake, which meant the lowest price possible for taxpayers. This is true leadership.

Today, MPs will choose to stand with the Canadian public or against the Canadian public. They will choose to support and condone the Prime Minister's unethical behaviour, which reeks of elitism and entitlement, or they will choose to support Canadians who expect their hard-earned tax dollars to go toward paying for things like infrastructure and services that they have invested in.

Will the Liberal MPs obediently do what the Prime Minister has demanded of them and defend his inexcusable actions, or will they stand up today for Canadian taxpayers and agree that the money does in fact need to be paid back? I am sure their constituents will take note of the decisions made today when it comes time to vote.

It has become increasingly obvious that the Prime Minister believes that there is one set of rules for him and there is one set of rules for everyone else. It was the Liberal Prime Minister who put his signature on a document called the "Open and Accountable Government" guide for public office holders. In this guide the Prime Minister instructs:

*Business of Supply*

Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries must not accept sponsored travel, i.e. travel whose costs are not wholly paid from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, or by the individual personally, or his or her political party, or an inter-parliamentary association or friendship group recognized by the House of Commons. This includes all travel on non-commercial chartered or private aircraft for any purpose except in exceptional circumstances....

It must have been a really exceptional circumstance to take that private vacation to the Caribbean. He continues:

...and only with the prior approval of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and public disclosure of the use of such aircraft.

Mr. Speaker, I kid you not, these are the words of the Prime Minister himself. These are his instructions to his members on that side of the House. Does he live up to them? No.

● (1705)

The Prime Minister ignored his very own requirements. He took a private helicopter to a private Caribbean island, on which he took a private all-expense paid vacation. Did he check with the Ethics Commissioner? No. Did he disclose it to the public? No. Could it be deemed an exceptional circumstance? No. He got caught.

If the Prime Minister cannot follow his own guidebook, can we reasonably expect him to follow the laws of Canada? Can we reasonably expect him to lead our country well, to create rules and regulations, and policies and initiatives that will serve everyday Canadians day in, day out? Can we count on him for that? No.

According to the Ethics Commissioner, she does question his integrity and whether he is ready and able to do the job.

I would imagine this is fairly frustrating for the Liberal cabinet ministers, who watch as their boss tells them to do one thing but then goes off and does another thing on his own. The Prime Minister's chief of staff and his principal secretary repaid \$65,000 they had claimed for moving expenses that were deemed to be inappropriate. They paid it back.

The former minister of health paid back \$3,700 to taxpayers when it was discovered she was using the limousine services of a Liberal Party supporter instead of taking a taxi. Why does the Prime Minister have no problem forcing his staff and the ministers to pay back questionable expenses, but exempts himself from the same level of expectation?

When the Prime Minister was first called to account, he declared that the individual taking him on the all-expenses paid trip, the Aga Khan, was a close family friend and therefore it should be totally acceptable. Not a problem, right? However, when the Ethics Commissioner did the necessary research, when she investigated further, she concluded that the Aga Khan could not in any way be deemed a family friend because the Prime Minister had not spoken with him in 30 years. I sincerely feel bad for the Prime Minister if this is, in fact, what he deems a close friendship.

It is clear the Prime Minister has tried very hard to cover his illegal actions, but the fact is this. He has been found guilty, guilty of accepting a gift he should have said no to; guilty of meeting with the Aga Khan, who has received millions of dollars from the Canadian government, and could have undue influence on the PM's decision; guilty of failing to arrange his private affairs to avoid this

opportunity; and guilty of accepting travel on a non-commercial aircraft.

Now that the Ethics Commissioner has reached the conclusion that the Prime Minister's trip was illegal, he needs to pay the \$200,000 back that was expensed to Canadians. If the trip was illegal, then so were the expenses billed to taxpayers.

The situation before the House today is not about \$200,000 being paid back, though the money should be. It absolutely should be. Today's dialogue is about so much more. It is about the integrity of a man who has been entrusted with the responsibility of leading a nation. It is about a man who chose to break that trust for the sake of selfish gain. It is about a man who, though found guilty, refuses to take responsibility for his actions. It is about a man who is able to say that he is sorry with his lips, because words are cheap, but when it comes to actually making amends for his actions and returning the money to the Canadian public, he says no.

This debate today did not need to take place. It was avoidable. The Prime Minister knew better than to accept this illegal gift that clearly put him in a conflict of interest. Sadly, the Prime Minister's inability to live up to his own standards means that for the first time in Canadian history, Canada's head of state has now been found guilty of breaking the Conflict of Interest Act.

The Prime Minister seems to think taxpayers should pay for his boyish dream of being a jet-setting celebrity, but he could not be more wrong. On behalf of Canadians, we call on the Prime Minister to function with integrity, show leadership, accept responsibility, and to make restitution. We call on the Prime Minister to pay it back.

● (1710)

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been hearing this all day, the allegations that the Prime Minister has somehow taken \$200,000. This is just a preposterous notion put forward by many members of the opposition.

Could the hon. member tell the House about what this really represents? It is RCMP security costs. These are costs that would have been incurred regardless of where the Prime Minister travelled or where he went on vacation. Those costs will always follow him.

I know the hon. member for Thornhill is trying to heckle. He was there asking the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner about whether more penalties should have been incurred for violations of the act, and she said "no". Why does the Conservative Party know better than Mary Dawson?

● (1715)

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, all day long we have been debating this. Should the Prime Minister be a leader? Should the Prime Minister act ethically? Should the Prime Minister take responsibility for his actions? Should the Prime Minister listen to the words of the Ethics Commissioner, who said that his trip was in fact illegal, that it should not have taken place, that he did not properly follow the rules that were put in front of him and in front of all of us in this place? Should the Prime Minister do the right thing? That is what we are debating today.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising again the Prime Minister's double standard, one standard for himself and his inner circle, and one standard for everybody else.

I like the example of the former health minister being forced to repay several thousands of dollars of inappropriate expenses claimed for travel. The Prime Minister, at the same time, stood and said, with the former minister standing behind him, that the government had to work to regain the trust of Canadians.

Would my colleague agree that the Prime Minister seems to be treating the finding by the Ethics Commissioner that he broke the law as something like a suspended sentence? There is no meaningful penalty the commissioner could bring down, but he seems to be looking the other way on the moral obligation he applied against the former health minister.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has put a guide in place with respect to the ethical standard by which his ministers, his cabinet, are meant to function. When it came to himself, though, when accepting a private vacation on a private island with the Aga Khan, he turned the other way and said yes to that opportunity. He just could not help himself. He had to say yes to this opportunity. Meanwhile, he expects a very different conduct from the ministers in his cabinet.

He forced the health minister to pay back \$3,700 that she had charged for a limousine ride instead of choosing to take a taxi. We are talking \$3,700, and she should have paid it back, which she did, and I commend her for that. However, the Prime Minister has been found guilty of taking \$200,000 of taxpayer money and illegitimately using it for a part of his vacation to a private island in the Caribbean. Why is he not paying it back?

**Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the parallel to the situation we are talking about today to a previous time when the Prime Minister was found to have had inappropriate travel. He immediately apologized and then paid it back. That was in 2012 when he took a limo ride to Kingston, and he repaid that money.

Therefore, not only is there this double standard for the Prime Minister in the case of other people compared to himself, but in this case what is good for the goose should still be good for the goose should it not?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, what we have here are two very different people that were leading our country. In 2012, we had a man who functioned with the utmost level of integrity, responsibility, authority, leadership, and respect for others. Today, we do not. Today, when an ethical scandal like this comes to the forefront and the current Prime Minister is expected to pay back the money that he wrongfully took from Canadian taxpayers, he will fight tooth and nail against it. Why? Because he has an attitude of elitism and entitlement.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will make it very clear that the previous commissioner, both in her report and in testimony in committee, answered many questions related to her report. We accepted those findings, and respect the fine work she has done. On this side of the

House, we respect the work of all officers of Parliament. Unlike the opposition, when officers of Parliament make recommendations, we take them seriously and work with them to ensure we follow those recommendations.

On top of this, the Prime Minister is committed to working with the office of the commissioner to clear all future personal and family vacations. As has been the case for past prime ministers and is the case for the current Prime Minister, whenever and wherever the Prime Minister travels, there are costs associated with security. We always accept the advice of our security agencies as to how best ensure the safety of the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister has said, going forward, he will engage the commissioner.

The commissioner has dealt with this. It is not the first time the commissioner has had to deal with issues. The Conservative human resources minister was also someone Mary Dawson had to deal with and provide a report on. We all have an obligation to report to the commissioner and the commissioner gives us advice, some more formal than others. That is the reality, and we respect what the commissioner presents to us.

Today I have heard time and again about ethical standards, as if the Conservative Party has more ethical standards. We all know that is far from the truth. I will remind members across the way of the reality of the Prime Minister and this government in comparison. The irony is that just prior to resuming debate on the motion this afternoon, we voted on Bill C-50.

What would Bill C-50 do? It would ensure more transparency and accountability for leaders, whether it is a prime minister, a cabinet minister, the leader of the official opposition, or the leader of any other political party, so when people pay \$200-plus to sit down with leaders, there is accountability. Elections Canada has to be told who the individuals are. There are other requirements. It is all about accountability. Even the commissioner, who Conservatives like to cite, suggested that it was good legislation, and the Conservatives voted against that. They voted against transparency and accountability. I have tried to understand why they would do that.

Last year, the Conservative leader had a fundraiser and he did not want to tell Canadians about it. When he was challenged about it, his initial response was denial, that he did not have that high-priced fundraiser. Then when individuals said that they paid the big bucks to meet with the leader of the Conservative Party, he admitted to having that fundraising event. This legislation would obligate, by law, the reporting of things of that nature.

It was interesting that in a story about that incident, the leader of the official opposition said that if it was law, he would have reported it. Is that the reason the Conservatives did not support that legislation, because if it were law, they would have to report it? That is the kind of legislation this government and the Prime Minister have brought forward to ensure there is a higher level of accountability and transparency on these types of issues, which are important to Canadians.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1720)

When the Prime Minister was leader of the Liberal Party, the third party in the House, with only 34 or 35 Liberal MPs sitting in the corner, he brought forward what we called proactive disclosure. He stood up on several occasions to get the opposition and the government of Stephen Harper and the Conservatives to agree to share with Canadians, in a transparent way, how MPs were spending money. Initially, the Conservatives and the NDP both said no. That was when the Prime Minister was leader of the Liberal Party, not the prime minister. What we saw was very much a high sense of accountability.

After the commissioner made her report, the Prime Minister did not go into hiding. He travelled the country. He went to town halls all over the country. Canadians, real people, got to ask questions of the Prime Minister, and their focus was on issues such as the economy, jobs, and health care. They were concerned about the different social programs the government is providing.

It is truly important for us to recognize that as much as the Conservatives want to continue to focus on being negative in all aspects of the Prime Minister's personal life, the Prime Minister and his cabinet are going to continue to focus on what is important to Canadians, and that is the middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, and the many individuals who we want to give that lifting hand to.

Our government will continue to be transparent and accountable for the many positive actions. Those actions have seen Canadians develop jobs that have never been seen in recent history for our country, with 700,000 jobs, and I think it was 422,000 jobs in 2017 alone, not to mention the redistribution of wealth, supporting Canada's middle class. Those are the priorities of the Prime Minister and the government.

I agree with the government House leader when she says that the Conservatives have nothing else to talk about because they know how well things are going and how well the government is performing, so they want to focus on the negatives, the personal attacks.

One thing I agree with my colleague from across the way on is that we did not need to spend a day on this issue. What we should be talking about today are those important issues that we hear about at those town halls the Prime Minister is doing. There are so many wonderful things that are taking place in our country, but we can always do better and those are the kinds of ideas we should be talking about in the House.

•(1725)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** It being 5:27 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (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 nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**Mr. John Barlow:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the recorded division be deferred until tomorrow, Wednesday, February 7 at the end of the time provided for government orders.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota):** Accordingly, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 7, 2018, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

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

•(1730)

[*Translation*]

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed from November 27, 2017, consideration of the motion that Bill C-354, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this bill, introduced by my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, pertains to an extremely important matter.

Let me begin by saying that my interest in this subject directly relates to the fact that I am what my family might call a bit of a woodsman. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about the stereotypical bearded lumberjack who lives in the forest, hunting and trapping to survive. I would not last an hour. However, let us just say that my entire childhood was framed, you could say, by wood, beginning with a cradle my father built. You see where this is going. As a young teenager, my Saturdays were spent at our local lumber merchant, Léopold Duplessis, where customers could buy two-by-fours and so on for renovations, construction, and building furniture.

*Private Members' Business*

This talent, which has faded somewhat in my generation, was something my grandfather had. The types of wood and the smell of woodworking will always be with me. I gained this new awareness as I got to know the region where I lived. Certainly, forestry is a vital industry for Quebecers, even more so for a region such as Mauricie. No fewer than 4,700 local jobs rely on the region's 33,000 square kilometres of forest. Across Canada, it accounts for 60,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Obviously, my awareness about the importance of using wood grew over the years. It grew from enjoying a family activity to an important environmental consciousness. As we all know, at a time when countries around the world are trying to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, forests are absolutely the biggest carbon stores we know of. Every time we use wood where carbon has been captured and stored for many years, since our wood structures last longer and longer, we play a critical role in the fight against greenhouse gases.

During my childhood, there was not just my grandpa's shop, which then became my dad's, and the trips to Léopold Duplessis's, but there were also my first paying jobs, which were, just like for the rest of my family, with the Canadian International Paper Company. I spent my summers roping up timber to feed the mill in the winter. Here again, I was in contact with my region's source of wealth, the forest.

Later on I became a teacher, somewhat removed from forestry, after studying geography. Again, I was shaped by the "land" approach of geography. Later I even became involved in research projects at Laval University and Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. This research served to bolster my understanding of the forest's importance not only in terms of nature's biological cycle but also its economic importance.

That is why I support this bill, since it promotes the use of wood in the construction and renovation of federal buildings by emphasizing the role that the Department of Public Works and Government Services could play in achieving this objective. Unfortunately, I am referring to the role that it could play, since as long as the bill does not enjoy the unanimous support of the House, something I hope it will, we will need to use "could" instead of "will."

● (1735)

Imagine the excellent PR that would come with Public Works and Government Services Canada using wood in its own construction projects. Imagine what a showcase this could be for the entire industry. It would also demonstrate the much more impressive possibilities provided by wood construction.

Not only does it support our logging industry, but the proposal put forward by my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay will also go a long way to protecting our environment, an important issue supported by New Democrats, as well as all politicians in the House, although perhaps not with the same intensity or the same concern for putting words into action.

There are significant international examples helping to show that the use of wood, even in tall buildings, is a solution for the future. Supporting forestry workers through federal procurement is a proven approach in many foreign countries. In France, wood-based projects

help the forestry industry compete internationally, as they do in the Netherlands, which has a similar policy.

We do not have to go as far away as France—we can look closer to home. Quebec has already had support measures in place since 2009. Unfortunately this is not widely known. Allow me to go over the highlights of these measures. Through legislation passed in 2009, the Government of Quebec decided to give equal footing to construction projects that use wood, which costs as much as 5% more than other comparable materials. Quebec understands that while it costs a bit more to build using wood, the benefits more than justify this slightly higher investment, even if only to support the entire logging industry and efforts to cut greenhouse gases. For a cost modelled at about 5% or less, there is recognition of the considerable effort that can be made in wood construction.

As we are always hearing in the news, the forestry sector has been in crisis for the past 20 years. This bill is therefore a great opportunity to give a boost to forestry workers. Scientific advances have led to substantial progress in the construction of tall wood framed structures. Large buildings can be built quickly and economically with wood without compromising safety, since that is almost always the first argument raised against wood construction. While wood buildings are considered to be solid, some are concerned that such buildings are at greater risk in the event of a fire. However, firefighters and fire chiefs have testified that they too believe in the quality of new wood construction.

According to Peter Moonen of the Canadian Wood Council, wood's strength-to-weight ratio is about twice as high as that of steel or concrete.

I will wrap up, since I do not have enough time to educate everyone following along about the virtues of wood construction. I hope that both the Liberals and the Conservatives, who have not always had a stellar environmental record, will use this bill as an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. Not only is it a tangible way to reduce greenhouse gases, but also, at a time when our relationship with the forestry industry has been tense, particularly given our neighbour to the south, this is a way to give our industry all the tools it needs to provide added value in wood processing.

● (1740)

I therefore urge all members in the House to vote not only in favour of the legislation introduced by my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, but to embrace it.

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I am pleased to rise in the House once again.

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-354, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, use of wood.

I would like to thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for putting this bill forward. I enjoyed our time in Kelowna discovering bookstores. I think we spent a day on the finance committee. It was a great pleasure to get to know him.

I fully agree with the spirit and intent of this proposed legislation, as it aligns well with the government's goals of supporting the Canadian forest industry and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

[Translation]

I listened to my colleague and friend from Trois-Rivières, and I appreciate his teaching skills. I also appreciate his romanticism over forestry. I share this romanticism since my own region, the Outaouais in Quebec, was also built essentially on wood, log drivers and forestry workers. My colleague spoke about the CIP and we also have a CIP tradition in Gatineau. I very much saw myself reflected in what he said. I thank him for his speech.

[English]

First, let me speak to the motivation behind the bill, which is the desire to support the Canadian forest industry, an objective the government certainly shares.

Few countries are more bound to their forests than Canada is. Our forestry sector helped build our country and contributes significantly to the Canada of today. It is an industry that accounted for \$22 billion of Canada's gross domestic product last year alone.

[Translation]

It also has a significant impact on more than 170 rural municipalities with economies that are tightly bound to the paper industry, pulp and paper plants, and other areas of the forestry industry. The industry employs more than 200,000 Canadians.

[English]

This includes 9,500 jobs in indigenous communities, making this industry one of the leading employers of indigenous people.

[Translation]

Our government is looking to the future and is proud to do its part to help the forestry sector to innovate and continue to be a vital component of our communities and our economy.

I would also remind hon. members that the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change requires that the federal, provincial, and territorial governments collaborate in promoting the greater use of wood in construction. Part of this promotion will involve updating the building codes.

This approach avoids the challenges that come with trade and supply. The 2015 National Building Code of Canada normally authorizes the construction of wood frame buildings as tall as six storeys.

However, Natural Resources Canada is supporting research and development to have the updates to the code in 2020 and 2025

authorize the construction of wood frame buildings as tall as 12 storeys.

[English]

Natural Resources Canada is also leading demonstration projects, in conjunction with industry, to encourage acceptance of high-rise wood buildings and to boost Canada's position as a global leader in wood-building construction.

I have talked about wood as a building material. I would now like to turn members' attention to areas where wood plays a part in our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, another worthy component of the bill.

As we know, the government has recently committed to reducing GHG emissions from federal buildings and fleets by 80% below 2005 levels by 2050. In support of the federal sustainable development strategy, PSPC is making government operations more sustainable through green building practices and other initiatives. I have been very impressed by the work of our officials in this regard.

One such initiative is the energy services acquisition program, which is well known here in our capital region, through which we are modernizing the heating and cooling system that serves about 80 buildings in Ottawa and Gatineau, including many of the buildings on and around Parliament Hill. A pilot project being carried out in advance of this modernization effort is testing woodchips for use as a possible biomass fuel. The result of this pilot project will help determine the potential for expanding this option to other federal heating and cooling plants.

● (1745)

PSPC is actually leading the way in embedding environmental considerations, and specifically greenhouse gas reductions, into the design and approval stages of its proposed projects.

I am pleased to say that in support of the commitment to a low-carbon government, PSPC is the first federal department to complete a national carbon-neutral portfolio plan. As such, the department now factors greenhouse gas emissions into its decisions on energy-related real property projects, from new roofs to updated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment.

All of this is to say that there is much that we are already doing in the course of our real property operations at PSPC to support the use of wood and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

I want to thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for introducing this bill, which will be another tool for achieving these objectives. That said, this bill would conflict with certain principles and policies and well-established, sensitive obligations of the Government of Canada, and therefore Canadians, and it may have unintended consequences. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources should consider amending Bill C-354 yet maintain the general objectives to resolve the following problems.

The proposed bill states that “the Minister shall give preference to projects that promote the use of wood, taking into account the associated costs and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.”

[English]

Though well intentioned, this provision raises some issues, two of which I will mention in particular.

The first issue relates to the Government of Canada's commitment to fairness, openness, and transparency in the procurement process, principles that are deeply enshrined in the Public Services and Procurement Canada policy. As much as Canadians no doubt want their government to support a sector as important as forestry, and we do, they also expect the government to adhere to the principle of fairness in procurement. With this in mind, we have to ask ourselves whether a minister who represents all economic sectors and all Canadians can realistically give preference to one building material over all others. If this bill were to pass as currently written, we would eventually find ourselves debating similar bills calling for similar preferences for other commodities.

The second issue I want to raise is how this bill would interact with Canada's trade obligations. This is an important consideration in federal procurement. Depending on how the provisions of Bill C-354 are interpreted and applied, the bill could be at odds with Canada's obligations under key trade agreements, such as the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

For example, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement prohibits discrimination against the goods or services of a particular province or region. With Bill C-354 giving preference to projects that promote the use of wood, it may be interpreted as discriminating against those regions that do not supply wood.

The bill could also be interpreted as setting out a technical specification in terms of a “design or descriptive characteristic” rather than “in terms of performance and functional requirements”, or referring to a particular type of material for which no alternative is permitted. This, in turn, could be interpreted as “creating unnecessary obstacles to trade” under article 509, paragraph 1 of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement.

NAFTA, too, prohibits any technical specification with the purpose or effect of creating unnecessary obstacles to trade.

This is not even an exhaustive list of possible trade implications.

[Translation]

At the same time, let us not forget that the government is already an important consumer of wood products in the form of furniture. Public Services and Procurement Canada policy requires contractors

to propose materials that meet the needs of a project, including the criteria of durability and performance, and that comply with the National Building Code of Canada.

In addition to being elegant, wood is a solid, durable, environmentally friendly, and sustainable material. Approximately 15% of the average annual \$160 million allocated by Public Services and Procurement Canada on interior design and furnishing is spent on wood products.

● (1750)

[English]

While Bill C-354 poses practical challenges in its current form, its goals are sound. With the co-operation and collaboration of all members in this House, it could be amended so as not to contradict long-standing federal principles and policies. The Government of Canada is committed to leaving future generations of Canadians a sustainable and prosperous country.

I therefore encourage hon. members to support the bill so that it may move forward to committee for further study and amendments.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to start off by commending my friend and colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay for bringing forward this legislation. It demonstrates not only to his constituents but to the people of British Columbia, and to people across this great country who are involved in the wood industry, that we can bring forward practical solutions to support the work they do to promote what is truly a sustainable industry.

I have had my own personal involvement in this industry, although in only one section of it. In a previous life, I had the honour of working as a tree planter in British Columbia's forests for eight years. I have planted trees everywhere, from Kamloops to Merritt to Prince George to northern Vancouver Island. I have had an incredible glimpse of the wonderful province I call home.

We have had bad forestry practices in the past, but those practices have largely changed. I have seen, from my own point of view planting trees, that forestry companies really are taking in what consumers want. They want certification, because they know that a lot of the people who buy wood products are looking for wood that is harvested in a sustainable manner.

Across this great country, thousands of Canadians either directly or indirectly make a living working in this important industry.

Let us look at what Bill C-354 purports to do.

The bill would amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act to require that in the awarding of certain contracts, preference be given to projects that promote the use of wood. We can see that in the bill. It would add, after subsection 7(1), proposed subsection 7(1.1).



*Private Members' Business*

It has been noted in a few speeches, but it should be noted again, that great advances have been made in tall wood construction. We now know that with today's technology, it is possible to construct large, safe wood buildings quickly and economically.

Building with wood produces lower greenhouse gas emissions and sequesters more carbon than other products. This can really help Canada achieve its greenhouse gas targets under the Paris agreement. That is something all members and many citizens of this country want us to do with sound policies.

In my own neck of the woods, in coastal British Columbia, the forestry sector has had very tough times over the last several decades. Given the difficulties the forestry sector has faced over the past 20 years, innovation and new developments, such as those that allow this kind of construction, offer a path forward for the future health of this sector. As the largest procurer in Canada, the federal government can give this sector a major boost by using this cutting edge technology at home.

Most of the sawmills in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford are operated by Western Forest Products, which has facilities up and down Vancouver Island. It has a total number of employees of just over 2,000, based on 2012 figures. It might even be higher by now. The company has sold over \$1 billion in products both at home and abroad.

There is a sawmill in my riding in Cowichan Bay. There are two facilities in Chemainus. In the last election, and even since then, I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of the men and women, proud unionized members of the United Steelworkers, who operate those facilities. They have good-paying jobs. They have the ability to live in our communities, raise families, and contribute to the local economy, all because of the focal point of those important sawmills in my riding, and I am sure within the ridings of many hon. members in the chamber.

People are a critical part of the wood processing industry. That includes everyone from employees to the people who live in the communities where they operate. Many people, directly or indirectly, depend on the sustainability of the business. They continually build the business, protect the tenure they have, and work co-operatively with external agencies and groups on progressive approaches to policy and operations.

• (1755)

I believe that the industry has come a long way and is very much committed to the communities in which it works, through employment, through sponsorships, and various operational public forums such as our public advisory groups. We know that the employees are the heart of any business operation. They are dedicated to safety, to professionalism, to their co-workers, stakeholders, and customers. They have a unique skill set which they use to achieve excellence.

I want to say a few things about wood itself as a building material. First of all, it is beautiful. Each piece of wood is a unique creation of nature. It is a fascinating process that allows such a small seedling, which I had the honour of planting throughout British Columbia, to grow into a massive and mighty giant, and from which we can derive such an amazing material. It is durable. It offers more strength in proportion to its weight than any other material. It is renewable. All

the trees are harvested sustainably in sustainably managed timberlands, and they are renewed through reforestation. That is part of the law in the province of British Columbia, that every company that harvests timber is responsible for replanting it.

It is also an environmentally friendly product. It is a low-impact green alternative to energy intensive building materials, such as concrete, aluminum, steel, and vinyl, which all must be manufactured from non-renewable resources using petroleum and other carbon intensive resources in the production. I do not want to say that we should stop using those other products, but if we are serious as a nation in finding a sustainable building material that will help us achieve our goals in greenhouse gas reduction, wood is the first place to be looking.

It is biodegradable and recyclable. Wood products decompose and naturally return to the environment, unlike most manufactured or composite building materials, which can end up spending hundreds of years in landfills. It is reusable, whether as beams or compost products. It is also a natural insulator. It insulates against heat and cold which saves energy. In fact, wood is 400 times more effective as insulation than steel, and 1,800 times more effective than aluminum.

One of the big things we have seen in the debate tonight is the importance for carbon storage. Forests absorb carbon dioxide emissions that are part of the greenhouse gases connected to climate change, and store carbon in the fibre of the wood that they grow. The structures that are built from wood products continue to store this carbon while healthy young forests continue to absorb it.

Consumers, retailers, investors, and communities are taking an increased interest in how their buying decisions affect the environment for future generations. That is something that, as the father of young children, I am very much concerned with. Considering factors beyond the traditional attributes of price, service, and quality, when all of wood's positive attributes are factored in, it is obvious that wood is a good choice.

I see that my time is starting to run low, so I will begin my conclusion. I will note that in the federal government's budget 2017, it provided Natural Resources Canada with \$39.8 million over four years, which will begin in fiscal year 2018-19, to support projects and activities that increase the use of wood as a greener substitute material in infrastructure projects. I believe that bringing this forward is our way of calling on the government to act on a good idea that it already supports in a very reasonable way. It will allow us to show our important support for the forestry communities across Canada, and those who work in the industry, while reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

*Private Members' Business*

In closing, I want to again thank my friend and colleague for bringing forward this important bill. From what I have seen so far, I think there is general support from all of the major parties, especially from members who are lucky to have forestry communities within their ridings. I very much look forward to seeing the bill proceed to committee. That is where the hon. members of the committee can do the important work, hear from witnesses, and get the factual basis for why it is a good idea for the federal government to move forward on.

● (1800)

**Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for this important and timely bill, and to thank him for his hospitality. He took me around to meet some of the operations in his riding.

This is important because Canada's forest industry is a major driver of our economy, employing more than 210,000 Canadians and contributing some \$23 billion a year to our GDP. In fact, forestry creates more jobs per dollar than any other resource sector, and we export more than 34 billion dollars' worth of forest products to 100 countries around the world.

Across the country, it remains the lifeblood of rural Canada and a major source of income for about one in seven municipalities. Just as significant is its role in the lives and livelihood of indigenous peoples, 70% of whom live in forested regions. Not surprisingly, forestry is one of the leading employers of indigenous people, providing some 9,700 well-paying jobs across Canada. These jobs are creating the potential for enduring prosperity and bringing hope to communities for lasting change.

The hon. member's bill is also timely, for a number of reasons. First is that this has been a difficult year for the industry and it needs our support. Over the past 12 months, the industry has faced historic fires, devastating infestations, and punitive protectionism from our largest trading partner on products from softwood to newsprint.

Our government's position has been clear and unequivocal. The U.S. duties are unfair, unwarranted, and unjustifiable. We are vigorously defending Canadian workers by challenging the duties before the World Trade Organization and the through the North American Free Trade Agreement. We will continue to fight and we expect to win, as we have in the past. However, we also know that in the meantime families and communities are hurting.

When the duties were announced, our government stepped up with an \$867 million softwood lumber action plan, a plan that included loan guarantees for industry, access to work-sharing programs for employees, funding to help provinces support workers, investments in forest innovation programs, and access to programs that will help companies reach new markets.

The hon. member's bill is also timely because it speaks to an industry that is in the midst of an historic transformation. It was not so long ago that this sector seemed to be on the ropes, its prospects grim, its potential limited, and its practices criticized. To many it seemed like an outdated and dying industry. However, instead of wringing its hands, it rolled up its sleeves and began a transformation whose best chapters are still yet to be written.

Forest industry leaders reached out to their critics, listened to their concerns, and made changes to their operations. With government support, it invested in research, developed new products, and established new offshore markets, creating not only a new image but a new vision of what forest products could be.

The result is that forestry is now one of the most innovative parts of our economy, writing a success story most Canadians do not know well or hear about often. Few areas demonstrate the renaissance of forest products better than its use in construction. New, stronger, and more environmentally friendly products are coming to market every single day. Engineered wood, for example, is as strong as steel, making it safe and practical, not only in buildings but also in infrastructure such as bridges.

These innovations are placing Canada at the forefront of tall wood building. In Vancouver, Natural Resources Canada supported the University of British Columbia in constructing a new student residence that is the tallest hybrid wood building in the world, towering 18 storeys. This magnificent structure is not only an engineering and architectural showpiece, it is also an environmental game-changer, storing more than 1,700 metric tons of carbon and saving nearly 700 metric tons in greenhouse gas emissions. That is like taking 500 cars off the road per year, and UBC is just the start.

● (1805)

Our government is also supporting the construction of a 13-storey cross-laminated timber condo building in Quebec City. The Origine project consists of a 12-floor solid wood structure on a concrete podium, and because cross-laminated timber has no gaps through which heat can transfer, it will have lower energy costs, about 40% less than a traditional building.

Canadian innovation in wood construction is not only creating magnificent new buildings at home but is opening up exciting new opportunities abroad. In Tianjin, China, a new eco-district covers almost two square kilometres and is built using Canadian lumber, ingenuity, and expertise. With its success, there are opportunities to reproduce it right across China.

These new building techniques and technologies also play a major role in combatting climate change. Most of us remember enough of our high school science to know that trees absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. What we might not realize is that the carbon remains sequestered even after it is turned into building materials, which means that wood buildings hold carbon for decades. Building with lumber also emits far fewer greenhouse gases than traditional building materials. It is no surprise then that the forest industry is a key part of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. Quite simply, increasing the use of wood for construction will help Canada meet its 2030 climate commitments.

*Private Members' Business*

Our government is supporting wood construction, including through our green construction through wood program, which invests nearly \$40 million over four years to use wood in non-traditional construction projects. This program is expected to reduce carbon emissions by as much as six megatonnes by 2030.

For all of these reasons, any bill that encourages greater use of wood in construction is to be applauded for the jobs it creates, the markets it opens, and the environmental benefits it brings. The bill before this House seeks to increase wood construction, but while its aim is worthy, its wording is problematic. As other members have pointed out, it raises questions of fairness in procurement by giving preference to one building material over another. It also risks running contrary to Canada's trade obligations, including possibly discriminating against regions that do not produce wood, and by prescribing technical specifications related to design or descriptive character, it might be seen to create unnecessary obstacles to trade, contrary to trade agreements.

While these concerns are significant, they are not insurmountable and I believe could be addressed through amendment. I would therefore encourage hon. members to support this bill in principle so that it can proceed and the appropriate amendments made.

I want to again thank the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for all of his work on this initiative, on the natural resources committee, and what I know he will do in the future.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join the debate on Bill C-354. It is a bill that seeks to encourage the use of more wood in construction. Up to this point in the debate, members have talked about their belief in the importance of the forestry sector.

A debate like this provides members with an opportunity to attest to their love for wood and their love for the forestry sector. However, what distinguishes our party is that when we were in government, we actually took action to support the forestry sector. When Conservatives were in government, it was not just a matter of words and professions but a matter of concrete steps that we took to ensure the health and vitality of Canada's forestry sector.

I had the pleasure of working as a political staffer for the then industry minister, a current member who is doing a great job still. In the context of the financial crisis in 2008-09, the work that he did and that we were able to do as his political staff to support Canada's forestry sector through those difficult economic times were a great credit to the last government. Frankly, the current government is far behind where we were in terms of understanding and appreciating the value of Canada's forestry sector.

When it comes to this particular bill, I generally do not like the words "virtue signal", because I think they bring virtue ethics as a philosophical concept into disrepute, but they are often used when individuals want to signal their support for an idea, cause, or group but are not actually taking the right or necessary substantive actions to support them. There is an effort to send a signal but there are problems with the detail and a lack of action on substance.

The bill, in particular, would add language to the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, which would say the following:

In awarding contracts for the construction, maintenance or repair of public works, federal real property or federal immovables, the Minister shall give preference to projects that promote the use of wood, taking into account the associated costs and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Now, there is not a huge amount of clarity on the mechanism, the way in which the minister would give preference, taking into account other things, but it certainly does seek to direct and in a certain sense limit the flexibility of action for a minister, who I think most Canadians would agree should be looking at the best value for taxpayers, the best long-term value, as well as taking into consideration the broader public interest issues like environmental well-being and impacts on communities. All of these things are and should be taken into consideration.

However, the bill in a way seeks to give preference for one kind of building material over another. Of course, there are a range of other building materials that are produced in Canada that benefit Canadian workers, families, and communities. Therefore, it is not obvious to me why we should write into legislation a requirement to preference one kind of building material over another.

Members have given eloquent speeches about the benefits of wood, and I applaud those members and I applaud those sentiments. However, certainly, given all of those benefits, a specific preference written into legislation is not needed. In recognizing those benefits, the environmental benefits and the benefits to the Canadian economy, when decisions are made on the basis of an objective criteria between different building materials, the best option should always rise to the top if there is an effective, dispassionate analysis of the merits of different types of proposals.

Our inclination would be to not introduce into legislation a particular preference for a particular kind of industry over another industry, especially recognizing our obligations in terms of international trade and recognizing that Canadians work in different kinds of industries. It is not for the government to be trying to pick who the winner and loser will be in that kind of competition. Rather, it is in the public interest for these evaluations to happen in an objective way.

● (1810)

Any time we introduce additional considerations, additional factors to consider, besides that clear objective public interest analysis, it adds potential costs and leads to a situation where, because of a presumed preference, an outcome might be different from what it would have otherwise been if the criteria had been a simple evaluation of which material makes the most sense in the context of this particular project. We in the Conservative Party strongly support the forestry sector, but we do not think that support has to involve hurting other sectors. We do not believe in what seems to be a bit of a tendency on the economic left to believe that wealth is finite and that if we give support to one person we have to take it away from someone else. We think that governments should develop economic policies that benefit all sectors rather than choosing one sector over another.

*Private Members' Business*

The kinds of initiatives that we undertook when we were in government to support the forestry sector were on that basis. We sought international trade opportunities that would benefit all Canadian sectors. We lowered taxes in order to benefit all Canadian sectors. We lowered business taxes. We lowered the small business tax. We cut employment insurance premiums. We sought to remove regulations that prevented all sectors from succeeding in this country.

We now have a government that wants to go in the opposite direction. The Liberals are nickelling and diming all sectors. They are raising taxes through their new national carbon tax proposal. The initial proposal was to raise the small business tax rate. Then they unbroke the breaking of that promise. Across the board we see efforts by the government to impose new regulatory as well as tax burdens on all sectors. I am sorry to say that it simply is not good enough for the Liberals to try to come back from that disastrous record and say to the forestry sector, "As much as we are overburdening you with new taxes, we are going to have an ambiguous section of this bill that is going to involve giving some preference to the forestry sector over other sectors." I say let us work on policies that will mean a rising tide lifts all boats whether they are made of wood or not.

In terms of the specific issues that the government needs to address and has failed to address thus far, one of the clearest areas affecting Canada's forestry sector is the total failure of the government to effectively engage on the international trade front. Let us contrast that with the work done under the previous government. When Stephen Harper became prime minister, he immediately said to the Americans that addressing the softwood lumber issue was a core priority. He said that directly to the president of the United States, and within a few months they got it done. The then prime minister secured a good deal for Canada, and one that lasted a very long time, until we had a new government.

The current Prime Minister has thus far dealt with two different presidents in the United States, two presidents who, dare I say, are relatively different in their approach and outlook. The first president that the current government dealt with was President Obama. We heard a lot about bromance and "dudeplomacy". Unfortunately, this "dudeplomacy" did not get us anywhere. The diplomacy part of "dudeplomacy" was totally missing from the Prime Minister's engagement with President Obama, so he did not get it done. In the infamous words of Michael Ignatieff, he "did not get it done". Now we have President Trump, a different president, again with no progress or results with respect to the softwood lumber issue.

The government wants to try and send a signal. It is loading up this industry with more and more taxes. It is failing to stand up for its interests with respect to international trade. It dropped the ball with President Obama. It is dropping the ball again. Now the government is saying, "We have an idea. We will support this change to the procurement rules that suggests we might, maybe in certain circumstances, give a preference for wood." That is not good enough. The government should stop simply trying to send signals and should start doing its job by standing up for Canada's forestry sector.

●(1815)

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to reply to the second reading debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-354, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act with regard to the use of wood in government infrastructure. I want to begin by thanking all the members who have taken part in the debate. I really appreciate that engagement, and all the views that have been put forward.

This is a critical time for our forest industry and for our fight against climate change. This bill could play an important role in both those issues.

The bill is timely, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources said, because we are at the cusp of a significant change in how we construct buildings. For over a century, large building have been built with concrete and steel. While that will continue for years to come, we have new engineered wood, or mass timber technology that can replace some or all of the concrete and steel in buildings. This is a very small part of the construction market right now, but Canadian manufacturers of engineered wood are industry leaders in North America. They just need a foot in the door to maintain and grow that position.

We need to provide direction to the government to consider wood when building large infrastructure, since, until now, it has only had concrete and steel to look to. It is not used to turning to wood as an option. We need it to turn and have a look at wood when making those decisions.

This bill simply asks the federal government to put the project materials to two important tests. The first test is the overall lifetime cost of the materials. The second test is the impact those materials would have on the carbon footprint of a building. The bill seeks to balance those two costs, the dollars and cents cost and the environmental cost. It is very similar to the wood first bill, enacted in 2009 in British Columbia, and the government procurement policies in Quebec that promote the use of wood.

In answer to what the member for Gatineau said, the bills are very similar, and they have stood the test of international trade agreements.

Off the top, I would like to discuss the two main criticisms I have heard about the bill and explain why they should not be of any real concern.

One is that it picks winners and losers, as the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan alleged just now. People say that it distorts the market. It does not do that at all. It simply asks the government to look carefully at the real costs and climate costs when choosing the best structural products. In fact, the cement industry recently asked the federal government to use exactly the same dual lens, lifetime costs and greenhouse gas emissions, when choosing structural products for infrastructure.

The second concern I hear is about fire safety of tall wood buildings. The fact is that mass wood buildings are as fire safe, or safer, than those built with steel and concrete. Those that have been built already have been designed with direct involvement and sign-off by fire chiefs. Remember, we are not talking about stick-frame buildings here. Fire acts completely differently when it encounters a beam that is a metre thick than when it encounters a 2x4. It is like sticking a match to a big log.

What are the advantages of building with mass timber? Why should the federal government want to use wood as well as the conventional steel and concrete?

First, wood sequesters carbon, and tall wood buildings can play a significant role in reaching our climate action targets. Each cubic metre of wood in a building acts to sequester one tonne of carbon.

Second, wood buildings can be built economically and efficiently, since they are typically constructed off site, then reassembled on site as each section is needed. Each piece is made with a precision unattainable with normal structural products. Engineered wood products can be exported to the United States without softwood lumber tariffs, and as other members have said here, wood buildings are beautiful.

Climate action demands a lower carbon footprint for our infrastructure, the forest industry needs more markets, and the mass timber revolution offers a means to fill both those needs. Wood buildings are safe, cost competitive, beautiful, and they fight climate change.

I am encouraged to hear words from the government side about sending the bill to committee for closer study. I really look forward to that. I ask all members here to support Bill C-354 to foster the engineered wood sector in Canada and keep our forest industry sustainable and strong.

• (1820)

[Translation]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** 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.

• (1825)

[English]

### TAXATION

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, last fall Canadians with type 1 diabetes spoke out about suddenly being denied the disability tax credit. While the government insisted that there had been no change to the policy, it soon became clear that a CRA memo last May had in fact changed the way applications were reviewed and approved. I was pleased to hear in December that CRA has recognized its mistake and returned to the previous clarification memo, but I am disappointed that Canadians already suffering from type 1 diabetes had to fight for a benefit that they are entitled to.

When I speak to Canadians living with type 1 diabetes, it is clear that they cannot really quantify the number of hours they spend on life-sustaining therapy. It is a 24-7 job to stay healthy when one has this unavoidable, chronic autoimmune disorder. According to Diabetes Canada, the cost of managing type 1 diabetes is an average of \$15,000 per year. Without the disability tax credit, some may be unable to afford proper treatment of their condition.

Unfortunately, this clampdown on eligibility for the disability tax credit is affecting not only those with type 1 diabetes, but also those with mental disabilities. The *Financial Post* reported that many who suffer from mental health issues, such as autism spectrum disorders and schizophrenia, and who were previously eligible for the credit have been cut off in the last two years.

It is important that we as a society take mental health seriously, and I am very troubled to hear that CRA is making it more difficult for these Canadians to get the support they need. Even more worrisome is that this seems to be just the tip of the iceberg. A recent report by the University of Calgary's school of public policy reports that only 40% of the 1.8 million Canadians who live with qualifying disabilities actually use the disability tax credit. The report goes on to discuss the unclear eligibility rules and the burdensome application process, which are likely to blame.

If the disability tax credit exists to help Canadians living with severe disabilities, its application process should not put an additional burden on them. When will this government stand up for Canadians living with disabilities and make sure that they get the benefits they so justly deserve?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to clarify the information shared in this House on this very sensitive matter. Our government has made absolutely clear in this House that we are committed to ensuring that Canadians receive the credits and benefits to which they are entitled.

Canada is at its best, and all of society benefits, when everyone is included. That is why our government is committed to ensuring greater accessibility and opportunities for Canadians with disabilities in their communities and workplaces. These are not just idle words. These words have meaning to our government, and we are delivering on them.

Over 6,000 Canadians participated in the national consultation to inform the development for the new federal accessibility legislation. These findings will inform the development of the planned legislation, which we are hoping to table this spring. In 2016, the minister of health announced five new SPOR chronic disease networks, led by CIHR. Through two of these networks, funding is supporting a continuum of research that engages patients as partners to improving diabetes and kidney disease outcomes. CIHR is investing \$12.5 million over six years in each of these networks. That is being matched by partners such as the CDA. These networks involve leading health researchers across Canada.

We will continue to take steps to make the disability tax credit more accessible for eligible Canadians. As was announced in budget 2017, our government has made it easier for Canadians to apply for the disability tax credit by allowing nurse practitioners to certify the medical information and effects of the impairment on the application form. Nurse practitioners are often the first and most frequent point of contact between patients and Canada's health care system. As a registered nurse, I know how much this change will help make the process more accessible.

On November 23, the Minister of National Revenue also announced the reinstatement of the disability advisory committee. This important committee was abolished by the previous Conservative government, the same Conservatives who are now somehow surprised about the impact of removing experts from the consultation process.

The Minister of National Revenue has asked the committee to make recommendations and to provide the agency advice in the following three areas: number one, informing people with disabilities and the various organizations that support them about tax measures and administrative changes; number two, improving the quality of the services that the CRA can provide to persons with disabilities; and number three, increasing awareness and understanding of the tax measures in place for people with disabilities.

We look forward to the committee's recommendations on how to improve the agency's services to Canadians with disabilities. I want to thank my hon. colleague for giving me the opportunity to clarify this information.

• (1830)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, Canadians with disabilities, both physical and mental, need our support. I want to take this opportunity to raise my concern over the fact that eligibility

for the disability tax credit is a requirement for other disability benefits, like the registered disability savings plan and the child disability benefit.

When someone is turned down for the tax credit, it means that they also lose these other benefits. The Liberal government should focus on making sure that Canadians get the benefits they are eligible for instead of on their misguided small business tax changes. The process for application and approval clearly needs to be simplified. What is the point of creating a benefit when the application process is so complicated and burdensome that the majority of qualified Canadians cannot make use of it?

**Ms. Kamal Khera:** Madam Speaker, again, I am extremely proud of our government's commitment to supporting persons with disabilities. Improving access to the DTC is part of our overall approach to improving health care and quality of life for all Canadians. From the beginning, we have been proactive on this matter. We have reinstated the disability advisory committee to provide a way for stakeholders and experts to provide recommendations to the CRA on how to improve the administration of the DTC. We have also asked the CRA to simplify the application forms, improve the data collection process, and publicly release the data pertaining to the DTC.

As we have stated time and again, we are fully committed to ensuring that all Canadians who are eligible for the benefits receive them.

## INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, back on October 18, I stood in this place and shared the tragic story of Jennifer Catcheway, whose parents have every reason to feel betrayed by the Prime Minister and his government.

Their beautiful 18-year-old daughter had been taken from them on her birthday in 2008. She had called her mother to say that she was on her way back to her family home in Portage La Prairie and was never seen again. Nine years later, police determined it was a homicide, but no one has been arrested and her body has never been brought home for her family to bury.

After years of waiting to tell their story, they were afforded just a couple of minutes at the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. This is obviously a massive offence.

The list of failures by the national inquiry is extensive, yet the Prime Minister continues to ignore the red flags or fix the process. Is this really the inquiry that he envisioned during the campaign?

The goals of this inquiry are incredibly important to bring answers and some measure of closure and peace to the victims' families and to provide a path forward for improving the lives of first nations, Métis, and Inuit women and girls, regardless of whether they live in urban centres or remote communities.

The national inquiry itself is in shambles. After just four months on the job, the second executive director has quit, adding to the list of more than 20 staff members who have resigned or been fired from the inquiry since it began. This includes commissioner Marilyn Poitras, who told the CBC that the inquiry was going down the same path as so many previous inquiries and would not provide anything new to fix these issues.

Then, in December, the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly passed a resolution calling on the Prime Minister to replace the remaining commissioners and reset the inquiry. Regional chiefs, like Kevin Hart, told the Prime Minister to address the situation right away. Francyne Joe, president of the Native Women's Association, told APTN, "We need someone to take ownership of this national inquiry." The response by the Prime Minister is to sit on his hands and do nothing. There is nothing to see here.

The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs said that her government would not interfere, that it was arm's length. They are responsible for this inquiry.

Not a week goes by without the media publishing yet another failure by this inquiry. Indigenous leaders are demanding the Prime Minister follow through on his lofty words and take personal action. This was a key campaign promise of the Prime Minister. If it does not succeed in the goal of bringing both peace to families and a path forward, then it is on him and the minister. He must address these red flags and failures as a concern and ensure that the government does everything it can to get it back on track, including the PMO, the Privy Council, and the department.

Canadians are asking this. Will the Prime Minister listen to the advocates, chiefs, and families of victims and get this inquiry back on track?

● (1835)

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to answer the question from my hon. colleague and I would like to acknowledge that I do so on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

Our government is committed to ending the ongoing national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We thank the independent commission for its interim report and the government is preparing our response to its preliminary recommendations. The independent commission's mandate is clear. Families must be at the centre of its work and it is committed to finding culturally sensitive and trauma-informed ways to ensure this.

The commissioners stated in their interim report that they are striving to make stronger connections with families, survivors, and women's and indigenous organizations who are their key partners on the front line. Many survivors and family members have said that they need to have answers and they want this inquiry to continue.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

Some families have been waiting decades for answers and we will ensure that families get the answers they are looking for.

The terms of reference authorize the commission to enquire into the circumstances of individual cases in order to identify systemic issues at play, be it institutional issues or otherwise. The mandate has always been clear that the commission can re-examine any case file it requests and can compel police forces to provide those files if they do not do so voluntarily.

The commission can refer any cases it chooses to be reopened. The commission is also authorized to examine and report on the root causes of all forms of violence that indigenous women and girls experience and their greater vulnerability to that violence. It is looking for patterns and underlying factors that explain why the higher levels of violence occur. This includes and has always included looking at issues around policing.

Our government is also committed to ensuring the commission has all the support it needs to succeed. We take seriously the concerns raised by the commission about administrative support provided by the government, and a working group has been created and is meeting regularly to provide effective back-office support to the commission to ensure it is able to do its work effectively.

We are also taking immediate action with investments in women's shelters, housing, education, reform of child welfare, and safety on the Highway of Tears.

In closing, we know that we need to bring healing for the families, justice for the victims, and to put an end to this national tragedy once and for all.

● (1840)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Speaker, no one is saying that this inquiry should not continue. It now has support of all parties in the House and was a key election promise by the government. We are saying it is time for the Liberals to listen to the red flags, and respond to those red flags and the very important voices of groups such as the AFN and the Native Women's Association of Canada.

I would like to know why, in spite of the fact that there are two ministers and two parliamentary secretaries who are responsible for the indigenous file, tonight as I ask this important question again, they are not here to answer those questions.

With all respect, it is time for the minister who was part of the establishment of the inquiry to listen to these flags and to take action.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the member that she is not allowed to mention who is and who is not in the House.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women.

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Madam Speaker, again, the Government of Canada is actively working to stop the racialized and sexualized violence experienced by indigenous women and girls in this country.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

As the Prime Minister said in the House on October 4, we continue to be committed to doing everything we can to work with indigenous communities, to protect our sisters, our daughters, our cousins, our nieces, our aunts, and our grandmothers. This must be done, but this must be done right for the survivors and families, to honour the spirits and memories of those we have lost and to protect future generations.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand here tonight. The Canadian Federation of Students is on the Hill today, and I thank its members for their work on ringing the alarm on sexual violence on campus.

We are talking about the federal failure to lead on preventing campus rape. One in five women will experience sexual violence while studying at a post-secondary institution. Young women in Canada face, and we heard this at the status of women committee, a fragmented patchwork of, and often inaccessible, services across the country. In some cases there are non-existent policies in schools and workplaces.

We heard especially why this is a national issue. A woman whose big sister goes to UBC may learn one sort of framework for supporting sexual safety on campus but also the reporting system and the justice system that might accommodate her if it happens, as it so often does, when the woman is most vulnerable, which is her first few weeks away from home. During their first few weeks on campus women are particularly vulnerable to campus rape and sexual assault. That young woman may well go to school at Dalhousie in Nova Scotia on the other side of the country without any family support, and may find a completely different framework, both to prevent assault and then to respond to it both from a health care and a justice system point of view.

That is why it is so important for the federal government to step in, use its good words around feminism and preventing and acting to prevent violence against women, and take that leadership role to coordinate campus and post-secondary responses to prevent and respond to campus sexual assault.

Some of my colleagues and I met with a group named Our Turn, a national student-led association advocating for an action plan to end campus sexual violence. Its report gave Canada a very poor grade. It really showed us that work needs to be done. It talked so much about the impacts, including the mental health impacts, changes in how victims of campus assault view trust. We really do commend that report.

The status of women committee made recommendations 11 months ago, recommendations 7, 8, 9, 10, and observation 1, on actions that the federal government could take. The NDP specifically asked Canada “to lead a national coordination of policies to prevent campus sexual assault”, and that the federal government lead national coordination around policing and in the justice system to ensure equal access to protection and justice across the country for victims of violence against women and girls.

That was more than 11 months ago. The only answer we got from the Minister of Status of Women is:

Preventing and addressing violence is a shared federal and provincial/territorial (PT) responsibility. Currently, all PT [provincial and territorial] governments have initiatives or actions underway that are related to GBV [gender-based violence].

That was it.

Madam Speaker, my question through you to the government is, when are you going to take this leadership role? Do you have anything more to tell us than this highly inadequate response?

• (1845)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Again, I would like to remind the member that she is to address the question to the Speaker and not to the parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for all of her efforts to combat gender-based violence, and her very fine work on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The hon. member would acknowledge that our government has made a strong commitment to ensuring that all women and girls can live lives free of violence. We know that the damage it does to women, their families, and communities is absolutely unacceptable.

Gender-based violence happens in both public and private spaces, including at home, at work, at school, on college and university campuses, and online. It often occurs because of someone's gender, gender identity, or perceived gender.

Women and girls as well as LGBTQ2 and gender non-conforming people are more likely to experience gender-based violence. The same is true for indigenous peoples, young women, people with disabilities, seniors, and those living in rural and remote communities.

That is why one of our government's first priorities upon taking office was to begin developing a federal strategy on gender-based violence. Listening to Canadians was a first critical step. We engaged Canadians and met with experts, advocates, and survivors from across the country to hear about their insights and experiences.

The result was an investment, the first investment of its kind, of \$100.9 million over five years for a plan entitled “It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence”. The title underscores our desire to engage Canadians in a conversation with three major elements: it is time to better understand the problem; it is time to believe survivors; and it is time for action. I think the hon. member would also agree that we need to break cycles of violence and prevent gender-based violence from occurring in the first place.



The strategy is based on three pillars: prevention, support for survivors and their families, and promoting responsive legal and justice systems.

To fill the gaps in data and knowledge on this issue, we are working with Statistics Canada to develop a new questionnaire designed to capture information on sexual victimization among students enrolled at post-secondary institutions in Canada. It will focus on experiences or the witnessing of sexual misconduct, harassment, and sexual assault, as well as impressions of the campus climate and feelings of personal safety. In order to make this as successful as possible and reach as many post-secondary campuses as possible, we are also working with the provinces and territories on the development and implementation of the survey.

We intend to continue our whole-of-government approach to improving how we respond to gender-based violence in this country, with the goal of engaging all Canadians, including men and boys, as part of the solution.

• (1850)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Madam Speaker, I would certainly agree with my colleague across the aisle that the government has made very deep commitments to women and to preventing violence against women, but that action is not following.

This was a debate we had in the House four months ago. I asked specifically about campus rape. The minister chose not even to mention students or campuses in her answer.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

I note that although the member opposite is describing a survey, not a single witness at our multi-month study recommended that we further survey the problem. They asked the federal government to take leadership to coordinate a national response so that young women across the country have equivalent access to justice.

Why will the government not take leadership to end campus rape?

**Mr. Terry Duguid:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the word “action”, and we know action is needed if we are to create a safe, inclusive society for all Canadians, including on post-secondary campuses.

There is some great work being done across the country by grassroots organizations and post-secondary institutions. We can learn from these best practices. Through our strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence, a knowledge centre will support enhanced new research and data collection to create opportunities to share that knowledge and ensure informed decision-making.

This is one more part of the whole-of-government approach that we are taking to help end all forms of gender-based violence.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

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