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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: We will now have the singing of *O Canada* led by the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, apparently the Minister of Canadian Heritage is being more forceful in her dealings with web giants. I am certainly glad to hear that. She said they will have to comply with our cultural policies and make sure everyone benefits from their business model. I am glad to hear that too.

However, the fact is that her government's budget does nothing to stop special treatment for web giants. Her government is still not making Netflix collect sales tax.

Quebec is doing things differently. Quebeckers do not think Netflix should get special treatment when it comes to sales tax. That is why all parties in the National Assembly want Netflix to collect sales tax and why Netflix will now have to collect sales tax in Quebec.

That is what I call a clear message. That is what I call respecting the people. That is what I call walking the talk and putting one's money where one's mouth is. I would encourage the government to follow Quebec's lead.

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[*English*]

WELLAND CANAL

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Niagara Centre on March 29, we will celebrate the opening of the Welland Canal and Lock 8 in the city of Port Colborne with the presentation of a top hat to the captain of the first downbound ship.

The top hat is an homage to William Hamilton Merritt, builder of the canal in 1829.

The people of Niagara Centre and its visitors from around the world are proud of this engineering marvel, which lifts ships 320 feet up or down the Niagara escarpment between Great Lakes Ontario and Erie. Last year, the seaway set a record of 298 days of navigation. The economic impact is \$36 billion and 27,000 jobs in Canada and the United States depend on this international trade corridor.

Whether it is the Mariner's Service the Sunday before the big day or visitors to the popular Niagara South Coast museums, the citizens of Niagara Centre keep the spirit and history of our Welland Canal alive.

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• (1405)

BEEF FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a former classmate of mine and a constituent.

Mr. Joe Hill was just elected president of Beef Farmers of Ontario. He and his family live just outside of Fergus and Elora in Wellington County. They have been raising beef cattle for generations. In fact, I remember when we both worked on beef farms when we were at Fergus High School, he on his father's farm and I on the neighbour's.

Ontario is Canada's second largest beef producing province, and Beef Farmers of Ontario represents the province's 19,000 beef farmers.

Once again, congratulations and best wishes to Joe Hill as he begins his term as president. I look forward to working with him to ensure that Ontario's beef farmers are well represented here on Parliament Hill.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is vital to Canada's economy, and traffic flow in the Lower Laurentian region needs significant improvement immediately.

Statements by Members

Our government is committed to supporting and developing transportation and public transit infrastructure. The Government of Quebec presented its budget yesterday, indicating that the Highway 19 project is now in the planning stage and that money will be allocated for dedicated lanes on Highway 15.

The people of Thérèse-De Blainville have been waiting for these desperately needed improvements for 47 years, so I am delighted by these commitments. Our region is holding a forum on traffic congestion on April 23, which will be an excellent opportunity for all levels of government to work together. I will be there to represent my constituents and the Government of Canada. I can assure the House that the people of my region will pay close attention to that work.

* * *

RAIF BADAWI

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Saudi Arabia, freedom of expression, association, and assembly is severely repressed. For five years now, the young Saudi blogger Raif Badawi has been the unwitting face of this oppression. He has been flogged and is still in jail despite winning a prestigious international award for courage in journalism.

For the past five years, his wife, Ensaf Haidar, and their three children have been working to get their husband and father released. In order to intensify pressure on Saudi Arabia and offer some protection to Raif Badawi, his wife would like him to be granted honorary Canadian citizenship. She has asked the Prime Minister himself, and he promised her that he would see to it. The time has come for him to make good on his promise.

[*English*]

Will the Prime Minister support making Raif Badawi an honorary Canadian citizen?

* * *

CROSS-COUNTRY RUNNING

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to highlight the achievement of Miramichi's own Laura Dickinson. Laura, who is just 18 years old, recently competed in the Pan American Cross-Country Championships in El Salvador where she brought home silver in the six-kilometre race. She also helped Team Canada's junior women secure the top spot to win a gold medal. This was not the first Pan American medal brought home by Laura, and she has also broken many provincial track records.

With such a bright future ahead of her, Laura has been given a full scholarship to Syracuse University. I am sure Laura will continue to be a shining star and make Canada and the Miramichi proud.

I congratulate Laura and wish her continued success.

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SASKATOON CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize CTV Saskatoon's 2017 citizen of the year, Mr. Hugo Alvarado.

Hugo is an artist extraordinaire. He arrived in Saskatoon more than four decades ago from Chile with little more than a pair of shorts and five dollars to his name. Now he is a very successful artist and also co-founder of Artists Against Hunger. Hugo and his fellow artists have contributed thousands of dollars through their charitable organization.

Hugo is a well-known teacher of art. In fact, my wife Ann was one of his students. He is a personal friend and his art hangs in our house. A reception to honour Hugo Alvarado as Saskatoon's citizen of the year will be held tomorrow in my city.

* * *

2018 PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride I recognize a truly inspiring Canadian today, from Meadowvale in my riding. During a hockey game, Dominic Cozzolino was badly injured and bravely endured months of surgery and rehabilitation when he was just 14 years old. He aspired to be a hockey player, and recalled overhearing a doctor say that he would be lucky to ever play again.

Dominic defied that doctor's comment. He did play again and he fought back his injuries with strength and determination. Not only did he return to the ice, but he represented Canada in the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. Dom and his team won silver.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Dominic Cozzolino in not only his remarkable achievements on the ice and representing Canada, but for being an incredible inspiration to all Canadians. I would like to say to Dominic, "Well done."

* * *

● (1410)

2018 PARALYMPIC AND OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have proudly watched the Olympic and Paralympic athletes represent Canada at the Winter Games in South Korea. While I congratulate all competitors, especially those from P.E.I., I do want to single out Mark Arendz, who stood on the podium six times.

Mark lived on a farm in the next community to mine, and I remember vividly the day word spread about the seven-year-old losing his arm to a grain auger. His family, his parents, and he accepted the challenges before him, and Mark insisted on learning all the life skills that came with being one-handed. Sport became his therapy, the biathlon shooting range his meditation. The results are individual gold, individual silver, three bronze, and one mixed-relay silver.

Statements by Members

Mark Arendz now holds the record for the most medals won by a Canadian in a single Paralympic Winter Games. Being selected as Canada's flag-bearer for the closing ceremony added to the honour. Mark is an inspiration and I congratulate him.

* * *

RURAL CRIME

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): “Canada's crime index rises for 1st time in 12 years, lifted by spike in Alberta”, “Landowners are free prey”, and “Elderly man beaten, robbed on rural Rocky Mountain House property”, Mr. Speaker, headlines like these are now commonplace as more and more Albertans are finding themselves victims of rural crime.

Recently, a 79-year-old man was beaten and robbed by three assailants. He was unable to walk for five days after these cowards punched him in the face and kicked him. He was 79 years old.

Hard-working, law-abiding citizens are continually victimized because we have a justice system that fails them every single day, and the current Liberal government has not introduced a single piece of legislation that addresses crime. There are judicial vacancies and a bottleneck in crown prosecution offices. Criminals are set free because the Liberal government has failed Canadians.

The catch-and-release system of justice is simply not working. My constituents have had enough. Do we need to wait until someone is beaten to death on his or her own property before the Liberals will take the issue of rural crime seriously? What is it going to take?

* * *

BRITISH COLUMBIA LAND SURVEYORS

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Association of British Columbia Land Surveyors on the success of its 113th AGM, under the chairmanship of Mr. Brian Brown.

Twenty-one years ago, I became a proud member of this profession under the leadership of Mr. Hans Troelsen and the mentorship of Mr. David Harris. In the words of the surveyor general of B.C., Mr. Mike Thomson, “BC land surveyors continue to be very relevant in the growth and development of British Columbia, providing fundamental support to the economic and social fabric of the province through the diligent preparation of quality surveys.”

I am proud to be part of this honourable profession. Please join me in welcoming all newly commissioned B.C. land surveyors; the incoming president, Mr. Roger Galibois; and the management board.

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a proud time in Newfoundland and Labrador. It gives me tremendous pride to stand in the House today to recognize an honoured former member, a true advocate for the people, and now Newfoundland and Labrador's newest and first female Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Judy Foote.

I would like to thank our Prime Minister and convey the gratitude of our entire province for making this marvellous decision. As the Queen's representative in Newfoundland and Labrador, I am positive that Judy will bring the same professionalism and passion she brought forth in her political life. I have no doubt that she will serve in Government House with the respect and expertise it requires, all while being close to home and still spending time with her family.

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations and thank the outgoing Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Frank Fagan. His honour has served the Newfoundland and Labrador people with grace and distinction during the past five years and has the pride of the entire province.

As the member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Newfoundland and Labrador, I congratulate the Honourable Judy Foote.

* * *

● (1415)

EASTER

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after another cold winter, Easter and the signs of spring are upon us once again. During Easter, Christians celebrate the sacrifice of their Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the demonstration of God's immense love for mankind. Like the Passover lamb, we remember that Jesus died in our place. The good news that Christ died for the sins of the world, was buried, and rose again is the foundation of the Christian faith, making Easter one of our most important celebrations.

As a Christian in Canada, I know I am blessed to live in a country where I can live my faith in peace and freedom. It is my prayer that Christians around the world will be able to worship and celebrate this holiday free from violence and terrorism. Mr. Speaker, from my family to yours, I wish you and all members in this House a happy Easter.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, I invited my constituents to nominate a woman who inspires them. I stand today to recognize one of those exceptional women.

Samar Hamadi, who was born in Lebanon, is a computer science graduate from York University. With her husband, she raised two engineers and a journalist. She is a co-founder of Women for a Prosperous Community, which has raised \$30,000 for Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital. Every year she also provides space, mentorship, and support to 200 young volunteers. They train to perform at Carassauga, Mississauga's cultural festival. The group has become one of the most popular attractions and has won many awards.

Samar is always seen serving others: youth, refugees, and those who need help. Her selfless, loving spirit and beautiful singing voice lifts us all.

Oral Questions

I thank Samar for inspiring us and for making our community better. I also thank her husband, Joe, and their kids, Adonis, Rami, and Rima—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

* * *

YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, can there be any further doubt about the passion, dedication, and mobilizing skills of young people, especially young women and girls?

We in Quebec remember the impact of student leader Martine Desjardins. Last week, we got another demonstration of the impressive fighting spirit and eloquence of young women, when 800,000 people came together to demand stricter gun control in the United States. One of the most powerful speeches came from 18-year-old Emma Gonzalez, who deftly blended words and silence to express her grief at her friends' deaths and articulate the need to protect students.

Furthermore, let us not forget Autumn Peltier, a 13-year-old Anishinabe girl who stood before the UN General Assembly and earnestly called for an end to water pollution. She explained that water deserves to be treated as human, with human rights.

I urge all the young women and girls tuning in today to be bold and speak up. Whatever cause they fight for, young women and girls inspire us all.

* * *

[*English*]

AUTISM

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 2, World Autism Awareness Day, will mark 20 years since my son Jaden's diagnosis.

Helen Keller once said, "Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood." These words are very powerful for me. For example, two years ago, Jaden and I had a great day speaking to 15,000 kids at WE Day in Saskatoon. Our flight home was delayed, and suddenly Jaden got really sad. Tears streamed down his cheeks. We found a quiet place at an empty gate, and I just held him, my 20-year-old son, for half an hour, until he felt better.

I reflect a lot on what I learn from Jaden. Though he struggles to articulate why he feels what he feels, he expresses how he feels very openly and clearly without words. For Jaden, much more important than the words I speak is the simple fact that I am there.

The life we live is never exactly the life we expected, but the unexpected life is where the real learning takes place.

The Speaker: It is always good to have Jaden here.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

● (1420)

JUVENILE ARTHRITIS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March is Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month, a disease that affects more than 26,000 children and teens in Canada.

Ten-year-old Ayden Soares was diagnosed with juvenile arthritis in 2014. A student in my riding, Ayden is unstoppable in his campaign to spread awareness of childhood arthritis and to fundraise for a cure. Despite the odds, he earned his first black belt in tae kwon do last year. I joined Ayden on Canada Day, where he broke 150 boards as part of his fundraising efforts. He wants to show others that you should never give up on your dreams and that a disease should never define you.

Since April 2016, Ayden has been arthritis-free. He continues to raise awareness of childhood arthritis and has become an ambassador for the Arthritis Society. Ayden's message is simple: "Arthritis hurts, but you can never give up. Keep your dreams, because they can come true."

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are starting to understand why the Liberals are going to such great lengths to cover up their disastrous trip to India. The Liberal member for Brampton East took a job with a construction company after getting elected. Now we have learned that his corporate boss was invited along on the Prime Minister's trip. He was there for one purpose: to drum up new business. Of course, new business for the company means more money on the side for the Liberal MP.

The member for Brampton East blames the Prime Minister's Office. The Prime Minister blames the Liberal member for Brampton East. Who is telling the truth?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this trip to India, we signed agreements worth more than a billion dollars, a bilateral investment between Canada and India, which will lead to the creation of close to 6,000 new jobs in Canada from our initiative. We met with a broad range of leaders in the cultural industry and in business. We are continuing to deepen the connections and the friendships between Canada and India, an important international partner.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems the Prime Minister was also there to help a corporate boss of a Liberal member of Parliament sign contracts for his private company, benefiting that Liberal member. That is completely unethical.

[*Translation*]

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and refer the matter to the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the opposition still does not recognize the importance of the relationship between Canada and India. India's economy is booming and presents some significant opportunities to strengthen Canada's middle class. We secured more than \$1 billion in investments from deals between Canadian and Indian companies, which will help create more than 5,800 quality jobs for Canadians. These investments will stimulate the growth of Canada's economy, will encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, and will increase co-operation.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know how important India is to Canada, and it will now fall to the Conservatives to repair the damage this government has done to our relations. A media representative broke his silence yesterday on the national security advisor's briefing on the convicted terrorist who attended one of the Prime Minister's events in India. He confirmed that the media received information that they were not allowed to share.

Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, but if the opposition members really understood the importance of what is going on between Canada and India, one would think that the opposition leader would agree to the confidential and classified briefing, during which he would receive all the information on what is going on between our two countries. The member opposite does not want facts. He does not truly want to know what is going on. He would rather play political games. This was Stephen Harper's approach, and it is disappointing to see that the Conservatives have not changed their ways.

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the public safety minister claimed that no classified information was shared with the media by the national security adviser regarding the presence of a convicted terrorist on the Prime Minister's trip to India. He then said that all the information was already reported in the media. Senior, trusted journalists who were on that conference call with the national security adviser say otherwise. They say that they were specifically told that they could not report some things. Why will the Prime Minister not provide the same briefing to members of Parliament that he has already given to the media?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians cannot understand is that the member opposite, the leader of the official opposition, has been given the opportunity to receive a full classified briefing on all aspects of this issue and chooses not to understand the truth.

For 10 years, Stephen Harper and his gang muzzled scientists, ignored facts, and ignored the truth. Two and a half years later, it is clear the Conservatives have not learned their lesson. They would rather not hear the truth if it jars against their political—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Oral Questions

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have invited the Prime Minister to unmuzzle the national security adviser and tell the truth to Parliament. He is the one that is refusing to come clean.

Of course, this is not the only issue the Prime Minister has trouble coming clean with. We only learned recently about the nature of the illegal gift he received during his illegal private island vacation. "The Trudeau Report" makes it clear that multiple gifts were exchanged. Could the Prime Minister explain exactly what those other illegal gifts were, who received them, and why he chose to hide this from Canadians for so long?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and answered all her questions. She put forward a report, which we accepted, full of recommendations, which we implemented. This is an issue that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has dealt with.

What is interesting is that the Leader of the Opposition continues to lay on the personal attacks, even though he committed, last weekend in a newspaper article interview, that he would focus on policy, not on personal attacks.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Government of Quebec had the courage to act. Both foreign and local digital platforms will now be required to charge QST. On the other side of the Atlantic, the European Union also chose to make companies like Netflix pay their fair share. There has been a consensus for over six months now on the fact that the government needs to modernize its laws and put everyone on an equal playing field. It is just common sense.

Will this government stop saying that it is impossible to do anything and finally make web giants pay their fair share?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP is claiming that Netflix and other web giants are the ones who will pay these new taxes. The reality is that taxpayers will be the ones to pay those taxes.

We, on this side of the House, promised not to raise taxes for taxpayers who are already paying enough for their digital subscriptions and Internet.

The Speaker: If the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert wants to remain in the House for the rest of the day, he needs to calm down and show some restraint.

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what will it take for the Prime Minister to understand that we want the sales tax to apply to everyone equally?

The 2018 budget implementation bill was introduced yesterday, and with this 547-page brick, the Liberals are once again breaking their promise not to introduce omnibus bills.

Sadder still is the fact that the bill contains precious few measures that will make a meaningful difference in terms of equity and equality. The government obviously lacks the guts to follow through on issues such as pay equity, parental leave, and reviewing the First Nations Land Management Act.

Why are the Liberals silent on these subjects? Have we not waited long enough?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with budget 2018, we are taking the next steps toward building an equal, competitive, sustainable, and fair Canada.

Our budget plan means that we can continue to invest in ways that will strengthen and grow the middle class and lay a more solid foundation for our children's future. By addressing the gender wage gap, supporting equal parenting, and introducing a new women entrepreneurship strategy, we are making important progress toward equality. This is a budget Canadians can be proud of.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not read their own bill. Their budget implementation act betrays all women who believed that the so-called “gender budget” would make their lives more fair. In spite of all the airtime that the government has given to legislating equal pay for work of equal value, yesterday's budget bill does nothing. The Liberals promised pay equity 40 years ago, and again in 2016, and again last month.

Prime Minister, wake up. It is 2018. When will the Liberals legislate pay equity?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith knows that, of course, members are to direct their questions and comments to the Chair. We will assume that was through me, I guess. That is what my colleague over here is suggesting.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that when we invest in women, we strengthen our economy. Budget 2018 takes our commitment to gender equality even further by investing in women entrepreneurs and women in skilled trades, by launching a new parental sharing benefit, and by introducing historic, proactive pay equity legislation. While the Conservatives want to bring us back to the Harper Conservative days of doing nothing to support women across Canada, we are ensuring that women have the tools and support they need to fully thrive in Canada's economy today and tomorrow.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian women deserve far more than those hollow talking points.

The Prime Minister promised to finally deliver on pay equity. The budget bill reveals another broken promise.

Some hon. members: Another broken promise.

Mr. Peter Julian: The Prime Minister promised to deliver enhanced parental leave. The budget bill shows another broken promise.

Some hon. members: Another broken promise.

Mr. Peter Julian: The Prime Minister implied, prior to the budget, that he—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby knows that I have asked members not to engage in chanting. It is appropriate that the member pose his question. I will ask him to carry on with his question and present it here in the House.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister implied, prior to the budget, that he would bring in pharmacare. This is another broken promise.

Why does the Prime Minister not stop breaking promises—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we keep our promises. We move forward.

The very first thing we did was lowering taxes for the middle class and raising them for the wealthiest 1%, which members across the aisle, Conservative and NDP, voted against.

We then brought in the Canada child benefit, which gives more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families and lifts hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty.

In this most recent budget, we are moving forward in recognizing that equity is also an economic benefit. By folding more women into the workforce, by giving them opportunities, we are growing the economy for everyone.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about treating women with respect.

On March 26, in response to the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, the Minister of Finance referred to her as, and I quote, a “neanderthal”. Our deputy leader pointed out his own personal hypocrisy in supporting women, and the finance minister answered by calling her a neanderthal.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and order his finance minister to apologize?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that I think that all members in the House should treat each other with respect at all times.

Oral Questions

With budget 2018, we are taking the next steps toward building an equal, competitive, sustainable, and fair Canada, where science, curiosity, and innovation spur economic growth.

Our strong fiscal plans mean that we can continue to invest in ways that will strengthen and grow the middle class and lay a more solid foundation for our children's future.

By addressing the gender wage gap, supporting equal parenting, tackling gender-based violence and sexual harassment—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

• (1435)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can do more than just hope that people talk to each other with respect. He can order his finance minister to apologize for his insulting and sexist remarks. The finance minister did not like being challenged by a strong Conservative woman, and he reacted by using sexist language and insulting terms.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and go beyond just hoping, and order his finance minister to apologize for his embarrassing behaviour?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons from members opposite when it comes to respecting women, particularly given that two and a half years ago Canada made historic gains and made news around the world by moving forward for the first time with a gender-balanced cabinet. However, the leader of the official opposition refuses to commit to continuing this world-leading practice, and will not commit to appointing as many women as men in some eventual cabinet. That is not right.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Prime Minister that the cabinet for the Government of Canada after the 2019 election will have plenty of strong Conservative women in it.

Just the other day, a Conservative member of Parliament asked the Minister of Environment a very simple question. Members may be disappointed to learn that the member did not get an answer.

I will ask the Prime Minister. Can he tell the House exactly by how much his \$50 per tonne carbon tax will reduce greenhouse emissions?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in Canada's history we have an actual plan to reach our carbon reduction targets. The Conservatives want to talk about what it will cost. I prefer to think about what it will cost if we do not reduce our carbon emissions, if we do not recognize that protecting the environment and growing the economy go together.

For 10 years, Stephen Harper blocked any movement on the environment and therefore could not get it done on the economy.

We know, Canadians know, that doing it together, the economy and the environment, is the only way forward, and that is what we are doing.

The Speaker: I am having great trouble hearing the answers. I would ask members to listen. Whether they like the answers to the questions or not, they have to listen, and I need to hear, because I need to know if someone breaks one of the rules of the Standing Orders.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the worst logic I have ever seen coming out of the Liberal government. The Liberals do not know if their plan will be effective at all. They cannot tell Canadians how much greenhouse gases will be reduced by their carbon tax, but then they say that they cannot afford not to do it.

What he is telling us is that we will all have to pay more for our home heating and fuel for our cars to bring our kids to school, to travel to work, and to buy groceries. However, the Liberals have no idea if it will actually work.

Can the Prime Minister please tell the House exactly how much carbon emissions will be reduced by his carbon tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, scientists and economists around the world have recognized that putting a price on carbon pollution is the best way to move forward to reduce our carbon emissions and innovate to grow the economy.

The folks on the other side of the aisle did not understand that when they were in power for 10 years, and they are doubling down on their incomprehension of something that Canadians know, that the only way to build a strong economy for the future is by protecting the environment at the same time.

The Conservatives' wilful blindness and ignorance on this is hurting—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am hearing way too much. I have heard very often today from the member for Battle River—Crowfoot, who has not had the floor. He should know that the time to speak is when a member has the floor, but he does not have it right now.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, all senators and all MPs voted in favour of Bill C-452 to combat procuring and trafficking in persons. Even the Prime Minister and all Liberal members voted in favour of the bill.

The only thing missing now is the Prime Minister's signature. Everything in life is all about priorities. Because of the Prime Minister's inaction, thousands of young girls and their families have continued living in hell for three years now.

When will the Prime Minister finally sign the bill?

Oral Questions

● (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality facing these young girls across Canada, particularly in Quebec, as we see in the news, is a terrible scourge. We have a duty to do everything in our power to combat procuring and protect our young girls and young men, in certain cases. We have a duty to do more.

Unfortunately, the bill, as introduced, contained some aspects that are unconstitutional. We are currently working on fixing the problem. We will protect our young girls across the country.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, every member of the House and the Senate put partisanship aside and voted unanimously in favour of this bill.

More than a year ago, a mother, Ms. Aubé had this to say directly to the Prime Minister, “If [Bill C-452] had existed two years ago, I would not be here today with my daughter.”

This is a serious matter. Thousands of other young girls in Quebec and across Canada are trapped by pimps in the hell that is human trafficking.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to sign—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a scourge that affects us across the country and we take this matter very seriously. That is why we are working with the Minister of Status of Women and the Minister of Justice to come up with tools to help us address or even eliminate this scourge of human trafficking and procuring.

We know that more must be done and we will do more, but we will do so within the framework of our Constitution, not by adopting unconstitutional measures.

* * *

[*English*]**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, official language minority communities across our country, including on the Prairies, have been waiting for the government to deliver on its commitments for almost three years.

[*Translation*]

Words are no longer enough. The government is making it look like the amounts invested are larger than they really are.

Is the Minister of Canadian Heritage using these figures to hide the fact that the investments in budget 2018 are much lower than what the communities asked for?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our two official languages are at the very core of our Canadian identity.

We are proud to have announced the largest federal investment in official languages in more than 15 years. We are investing nearly \$500 million in a community-based action plan. After 10 years of underfunding by the Conservatives, we are taking real action. We will strengthen our communities, improve access to services, and

promote a bilingual Canada. Our announcement is proof that we listened to the communities.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister finally unveiled the action plan for official languages. Even though there is not as much funding as communities hoped, the action plan promises long-awaited reinvestments across the country. The government has announced more action on immigration and early childhood, which are two vital areas for our communities. However, we are disappointed by the lack of improvement in leadership and governance.

Absent leadership or governance from the Liberal government, what is to prevent the Official Languages Act from continuing to be breached time and time again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, official languages and the protection of official language minority communities across Canada are at the heart of our identity as Liberals and as a government. We are going to keep listening to and working with these communities. That is why we are so proud of the historic investments in official languages that we announced today. A key element is that there is more transparency and accountability regarding this funding, so people can really see what we are doing to promote official languages across the country.

* * *

[*English*]**ETHICS**

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, after the member of Parliament for Brampton East was elected, he started to accept contracts from various people within his constituency. Ironically, the president and his boss was invited along on this disastrous trip to India which the Prime Minister and his entourage undertook. For me, that poses some significant questions with respect to conflicts of interest.

Will the Prime Minister tell us who invited Mr. Yenilmez and who approved that invitation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to be working to create more opportunities for the Canadian middle class and people working hard to join it.

Events on these trips are about strengthening ties and bringing people together, and to make these events as accessible as possible for those who want to participate. MPs and business organizations will often invite community and business leaders to join. These exchanges increase Canada's standing in the global community. We are going to continue to do just that.

● (1445)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not about whether or not businesses are invited along. It is about whether or not the public can have the trust in the integrity of the members of Parliament inviting these businesses along

Oral Questions

Where the member has gone woefully wrong, and I must assume he offered the invitation since the Prime Minister has not said anything different, is that he is a lawyer. He would have read his code of conduct and he would know that if there was a grey area as to whether he was furthering the private interests of his contracted employer, then he should seek an opinion of the Ethics Commissioner.

Did he seek an opinion of the Ethics Commissioner before he invited his boss to rub elbows with the Prime Minister and the ministers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are stuck in the politics of innuendo and insinuation, instead of working with us to make progress on the issues that matter most to Canadians. Unlike Stephen Harper's Conservatives, we promised Canadians to be open and accessible, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Engaging countries abroad is not about our government; it is about creating opportunities for Canadians. That is why we are proud that hundreds of Canadian business and community leaders have joined us in strengthening Canadian ties abroad, and we will continue to help them do that.

The Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind members that quiet does not indicate consent or agreement. In fact, it was very quiet when the member for Milton posed her question and I do not see why it cannot be quiet during the response. Whether the members agree or not, it does not indicate agreement.

[*Translation*]

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

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the owner of a construction company linked to the member for Brampton East was invited to go along on the Prime Minister's trip to India. That is not the end of the story. The media are saying that the member was paid by this company and that he invited the owner without the authorization of the Ethics Commissioner. The Prime Minister's Office says that it was the member for Brampton East who invited his business partner to India, but the member denies this version of events.

Who is telling the truth? Can we expect another investigation by the Ethics Commissioner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, it is disappointing that the opposition still does not recognize the importance of the relationship between Canada and India. India's economy is booming and presents some significant opportunities to strengthen Canada's middle class. We secured more than \$1 billion in investments from deals between Canadian and Indian companies, which will help create more than 5,800 quality jobs for Canadians. These investments are stimulating the growth of Canada's economy and they will foster innovation and entrepreneurship and increase co-operation.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our ethics code says, "a Member shall not act in any way to further his or her private interests...or to improperly further another person's or entity's private interests." The Liberal member for

Brampton East has admitted that he helped his business affiliates gain high level access to the Prime Minister and other key cabinet ministers during the Prime Minister's trip to India.

Will the Prime Minister now refer this case to the Ethics Commissioner or do we have to?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a country, we are proud to engage with friends and allies abroad in an effort to create more opportunities for the Canadian middle class and those working hard to join it. Those events on these trips are about strengthening ties and bringing people together. Canada benefits when hundreds of community and business leaders are able to join us.

To make these events as accessible as possible, many MPs arrange invites for people who request them, and even more are made available to organizations like the Canada-India Business Council.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives refused to deliver on our Kyoto commitment. The Liberals have abandoned their Copenhagen commitment for 2020. The environment commissioner reported that the Liberals climate change measures would be insufficient to comply with the deeper commitments for 2030.

The minister says, "don't worry", yet offers no detailed accounting on the reductions from her proposed measures. When will she establish measurable interim reduction targets and an independent entity to audit, verify, and publicly report, as required under the Paris agreement?

● (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reports of the environment commissioner are very important to highlight the status of issues and to highlight issues that require attention. We welcome this report.

However, let us be clear about what it says. She said that the pan-Canadian framework represented significant progress and looked forward to seeing its implementation. She also said that this was one of the best climate plans that Canada had ever had. We agree. We have a plan to achieve our commitments, and we are committed to doing so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one except for maybe the Liberals believes that the measures currently in place go far enough to combat climate change.

Yesterday, the commissioner of environment was unequivocal in her criticism of this government's inaction. Last fall, the OECD and the UN called on Ottawa to quicken the pace on meeting its commitments. Even the latest report submitted to the UN by the Department of the Environment states that the Liberal government is going to miss its target by 66 megatonnes.

Oral Questions

When are the Liberals going to get their heads out of the sand and start taking action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if, for once, the hon. members across the way read the commissioner's report in its entirety because the commissioner said that the Canada-wide framework represents significant progress and that she looks forward to its implementation. The bulk of what she is working on is spread out over the years before we would put this plan in place. She also mentioned that this was one of the best climate plans that Canada has ever had. We agree. We have a plan to honour our commitments and we are determined to follow it in order to do just that.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was there when the minister responsible for official languages and the Prime Minister unveiled our government's new action plan for official languages.

I have been hearing positive feedback from my constituents. They are saying that our plan is based on their comments and needs. They finally have a plan that lives up to their expectations.

After 10 years of inaction by the Conservative government on official languages, can the Prime Minister tell me how this plan will help the francophone community in my riding and official language minority communities across the country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his question and for the work that he does for his constituents.

Today, we announced the largest federal investment in official languages in over 15 years: nearly \$500 million for a community-based action plan.

After 10 years of underfunding by the Conservatives, we are taking real action. We are investing in early childhood development, in community and educational infrastructure, in access to health care in the minority language, and in francophone immigration. The communities can continue to count—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Holy Week, so I am in good spirits today.

I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister for his sense of humour. Earlier he said, "we keep our promises." That is not really true. The Liberals said that they would run a small deficit, but we now have an \$18-billion deficit. They also said that they would balance the budget in 2019, but they have no idea when that will happen.

Even worse, the government is keeping secrets. The government does not really know when or how it is going to spend the \$7 billion that it has hidden in the \$18 billion deficit.

Why is the Prime Minister keeping secrets from Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the course of 10 years, the former Conservative government added almost \$150 billion to the national debt without creating the growth that Canadians should have been able to expect.

For the past two and a half years, we have invested to meet the needs of the middle class, Canadians, and our communities. We have also had the best growth among G7 countries last year. We created more than 600,000 jobs. In addition, each year we have reduced our debt-to-GDP ratio. We are creating growth by acting responsibly.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government will go down in history for bringing our national debt to \$1 trillion. This is unacceptable.

Let me get back to my question about secrets. Why is the government hiding \$7 billion in its \$18-billion deficit, which is three times higher than what it had announced? Why is it hiding this \$7 billion from members of Parliament and not giving Canadians the truth? Why is the Prime Minister keeping a \$7 billion secret from Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to finally get a question on the economy from the members opposite. They would rather make personal attacks instead of talking about the economy. Let us talk about it.

Under the Harper government, the Conservatives added \$150 billion to our national debt and they did not create the necessary growth. Two and a half years later, we are investing in Canadians. We lowered taxes on the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. This gave Canada the best growth rate in the G7 last year, and it created 600,000 jobs.

* * *

●(1455)

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election the Prime Minister put his hand on his heart and pleaded with people to believe he would not raise taxes on the middle class. Now, 80% of middle-class Canadians are paying higher income tax. Yesterday, at the government's budget briefing, we learned there would also be a new 11¢ a litre Liberal tax on gas.

Will the Prime Minister announce today that all middle-class Canadians will be exempt from paying his new 11¢ a litre gas tax?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the Conservatives focused on a plan that helped and gave benefits to the wealthiest, while asking the middle class to pay more and not delivering on the kind of growth and jobs that Canadians earned. Quite frankly, they had the worst rate on growth of any prime minister since R.B. Bennett in the depths of the Great Depression.

In two and a half years we have turned that around. We have put more money in the pockets of the middle class and those working hard to join it. We have lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them on the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was whether he would exempt middle-class taxpayers from his 11¢ a litre tax on gas. It is a disproportionately high expense for middle and low-income people, and he will make it even higher.

I will ask him a different question, because he evaded the last one.

I asked an official yesterday how much the carbon tax would cost the average middle-class family?" The response was "That information is something I can't share with you at this time." Could the Prime Minister share that information with Canadians at this time?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that the way to grow the economy is by protecting the environment at the same time. The best way to reduce our carbon emissions, the world agrees, is to bring in a price on carbon pollution. That is exactly what we are doing.

What we are seeing as we move forward on this is that we are also creating innovation, growth, and green benefits across the country, as new jobs are created and as greater opportunities are created. The previous government did not understand that, and still today they do not understand the economy and the environment.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a red light flashing in the Minister of Health's office, but she does not seem to see it.

The Public Health Agency of Canada just released data showing that over 4,000 deaths occurred from opioids in 2017. That is an increase of 40%. Meanwhile, the Dopalliés project in Hochelaga is in jeopardy because that same agency still refuses to renew its funding.

How many more people must die before the minister intervenes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is in the midst of a national public health crisis, and our government is extremely concerned about the tragic consequences it has had across the country.

I am deeply saddened by the distressing figures released yesterday, but I am pleased to say that budget 2018 includes an investment of more than \$231 million for additional measures to help address the opioid crisis.

We will continue to bring forward evidence-based solutions to help save lives and turn the tide of this crisis.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those words, "while the death toll mounts", opioid overdoses are now claiming more lives than motor vehicle accidents and homicides combined. The year 2017 was the worst one on record with over 4,000 lives lost, which is 40% more than in 2016. This escalating tragedy is fuelled by a tainted illicit drug supply and the greatest barrier to addressing it is the harm caused by the criminalization of substance use.

How does the government expect to help vulnerable people suffering from addiction when it continues to treat them as criminals?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past months I have had the opportunity to get out on the front lines to talk to first responders, talk to social workers, and talk to people who are dealing with the tragedy of this epidemic. I have talked to countless families who have lost loved ones.

This is an epidemic across this country which we are taking very seriously. Building on our actions today through budget 2018, we are investing over \$231 million for additional measures to help address the opioid crisis, including \$150 million for emergency treatment funding for provinces and territories. We will continue to work to bring forward evidence-based—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The member for Cariboo—Prince George.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was in Grand Bank, Newfoundland and Labrador, and I met a gentleman named Edgar. Edgar has worked at the surf clam processing plant for years, but the minister's callous political decision to award a lucrative government quota to his Liberal friends and family has shaken Edgar's life. He is now at risk of losing his job. He does not want EI. He wants to work.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to Edgar's family and all of the others put out of work because of the minister's corrupt process?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' habit of pitting Canadians against indigenous Canadians is, quite frankly, disgusting.

Oral Questions

Our decision to increase indigenous participation in fishing is based on our government's commitment to developing a renewed relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples. Enhancing access to the Arctic surf clam fishery broadens the distribution of benefits from this public resource and is a powerful step toward reconciliation. This will significantly enhance indigenous participation in the offshore fisheries in Atlantic Canada and Quebec, and allow the benefits of this lucrative fishery to flow to more Canadians.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. We are talking about a group of Liberal family members who had no boat and were not even incorporated until after the announcement was made. They did not have any first nation partners. As a matter of fact, their bid had multiple placeholders. They still secured a lucrative government quota worth hundreds of millions of dollars without meeting critical bid criteria.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, restart the process, and ensure his minister is recused from it so that we can have an honest outcome?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, 2018, Chief Aaron Sock issued a statement identifying the partners comprising the Five Nations Clam Company. They are Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick, Potlotek First Nation in Nova Scotia, Abegweit First Nation in Prince Edward Island, Innu First Nation of Nutashkuan in Quebec, and the Southern Inuit of NunatuKavut through its commercial fisheries entity, NDC Fisheries Limited, in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is an opportunity to advance reconciliation. That matters to this government and to most Canadians.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives support Canadians' right to peaceful assembly, but the B.C. Supreme Court said that protesters must be five metres away from work site entrances, and must not block workers or equipment at the Trans Mountain expansion.

The Prime Minister remains MIA on the approved project altogether and he is silent about violence at the construction site. Last week, 173 protesters were arrested for breaking the ruling. One protester even shoved a police officer to the ground, causing a knee injury. Another was kicked in the head.

Does the Prime Minister condemn this violence?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government supports every Canadian's right to peaceful protest and to have his or her voice heard. We live in a country where different voices can be heard in a peaceful way. We have taken a decision on this project that is in the national interest, and we are committed to seeing this pipeline built. We expect all protesters to act within the law.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was in Sault Ste. Marie, Regina, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, and Hamilton as part of a very successful cross-country

tour of aluminum and steel facilities. These industries are part of a fair, balanced, integrated trade system with the United States. U.S. tariffs are unacceptable, and the Prime Minister acted quickly and forcefully, through concrete actions to ensure the tariff would not proceed.

Can the Prime Minister update this House about what action the government is taking to further strengthen the steel and aluminum industries in this great country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the Soo for his hard work as steel caucus co-chair.

Earlier this month, I stood with Liberal members and workers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie, and Saskatoon to defend this vital industry from unfair steel and aluminum tariffs. We announced measures to further strengthen our enforcement regime against unfairly cheap foreign steel. Liberal MPs will continue to fight for our aluminum and steel workers, who are such an important part of their communities and Canada's economy.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in January, the Prime Minister made a big show of himself in Quebec City, where he delivered all kinds of lofty rhetoric but nothing concrete. Shipyard workers are no fools. They know that the government already has everything it needs to move forward and that the only thing missing is actual political will.

The *Aiviq* is ready to help the Coast Guard, which needs that vessel to serve Canadian ports. What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

Why is he breaking his promise and not putting the Davie shipyard workers back to work for the benefit of the Canadian Coast Guard?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are currently negotiating the possibility of acquiring some icebreakers. We are investing in the Canadian Coast Guard so that it can deliver the vital services Canadians need, while also developing our economy and creating jobs.

We are in active discussions with the Davie shipyard regarding interim icebreaker capability. We know that the Davie shipyard workers do excellent work. We only need to look at their work on the *Asterix* to see that.

Unlike the Conservatives, who want to make cuts rather than investments, we are ensuring that the Canadian Coast Guard has the resources it needs.

Oral Questions

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, help me out here. The member for Brampton East gets himself elected and then goes into business with a local company. I know that is pretty unusual, but at least we have some kind of rules. However, he then helps his friend get access to the Prime Minister and senior cabinet ministers during the notorious India trip.

The reason we have a conflict of interest code is so that backbenchers do not sell access to the highest office in the land, like some kind of huckster peddling velvet Elvis paintings. Does the Prime Minister not understand that, or does he think that the rules for his friends do not count?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to be working toward more opportunities for the Canadian middle class and those working hard to join it. Events on these trips are about strengthening ties and bringing people together to make these events as accessible as possible for those who want to participate. MPs and business organizations will often invite community and business leaders to join.

These exchanges increase Canada's standing in the global community, and we are going to continue to do just that.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saint John—Rothesay is the perfect example of a place where we have local businesses that are thriving and creating more well-paying jobs due to substantial investments made in them by the federal government through the regional development agency ACOA. However, due to the political stunt pulled by the Conservatives last week during which they voted against investing in our region, we could have lost crucial funding for ACOA and small and medium-sized businesses in my riding.

Would the Prime Minister please share what we stood up for when the Conservatives pulled political stunts?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his advocacy and activism on behalf of his constituents in Saint John—Rothesay.

Regional economic development agencies help Canadians seize new economic opportunities in all regions of the country. However, last week, Conservatives actually voted against funding for Western Economic Diversification Canada, ACOA, and CanNor. Thankfully, Liberals voted to protect the west, the Atlantic, and the north from the Conservatives' attempt to cut their funding.

We also announced \$511 million—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Are we going to have another question from this side or are we going to have quiet? Order.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Afghan Sikh refugees have been sitting in transit in India for the last two years hoping to come to Canada to escape persecution and war. The Prime Minister has received letters from the Sikh community leaders asking him to intervene, but so far, there has been only silence.

Why does the Prime Minister not have the decency to at least respond to their letters?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the deep connection between Canada and India and our diaspora, and particularly of the strong links we have with the Sikh community here in Canada, in India, and around the world. We will continue to work closely with members of the Sikh community, whether they be in Afghanistan or elsewhere, to make sure we are moving forward in a way that respects their rights and gives them opportunities.

This is something we are very focused on, and will continue to work hard on.

* * *

● (1510)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-452 was passed unanimously and received royal assent in June 2015. This bill included consecutive sentences and reversed the burden of proof. It was a strong and tangible gesture to take action against pimps. However, the Liberals backtracked and introduced Bill C-38, a truncated version of Bill C-452, which itself has been gathering dust since February 2017. It has yet to be debated.

Did the Prime Minister really want to take action against sexual exploitation or was this just another show?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, some aspects of that bill were unconstitutional.

We promise to move forward to protect young women and girls across the country, especially where they are most vulnerable. We are going to fight against procuring. We will fight against human trafficking. We will do so in accordance with the law and our Constitution, but we will take action.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, since I was cut off. If you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the Prime Minister to answer the following question.

Since they are missing, will the Prime Minister put pay equity and enhanced parental leave into the budget bill, Bill C-74?

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find the unanimous consent of my colleagues in the House for the following motion: that, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-38, an act to amend an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding exploitation and trafficking in persons, be deemed debated at second reading, deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, deemed considered by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order. As you know, it is unparliamentary to point out the absence or presence of a member in the House of Commons. However, earlier today the Prime Minister was extolling the virtues of the billions of dollars of spending that he complains our party voted against during the lengthy estimates voting process.

I simply point out that he did not vote for 15 hours straight. If he actually believed any of it was meritorious, why did he not stand in his place?

The Speaker: That sounds more like debate to me.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the 2017 by-elections. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition repeatedly asked the Prime Minister, who is here today, to apologize because his Minister of Finance insulted women in the House by calling them neanderthals. I would ask that someone on that side of the House have the courage to apologize on behalf of the Liberals.

The Speaker: That strikes me as being a matter of debate.

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to the Orders of the Day.

● (1515)

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:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1550)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 643*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen

Routine Proceedings

Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Harvey
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Khalid
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Monsef
Murray
Nault
O’Connell
Oliver
Oueltette
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Poissant
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Yip

Goodale
Hardie
Hébert
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney

McDonald
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O’Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Picard
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
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Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz
Nater
O’Toole
Pauzé
Quach
Rankin
Reid
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Shiple
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Garrison
Genuis
Gladu
Gourde
Jeneroux
Julian
Kent
Kmiec
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch
Lloyd
MacGregor
Maguire
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore
Nantel
Nicholson
Paul-Hus
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I have checked with the House leaders of the various parties, and I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees to allow me to table a report from the public accounts committee.

• (1555)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to revert to presenting reports from committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all parties for their unanimous consent to table this report.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 43rd report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Report 3, Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, of the Fall 2017 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Angus
Ashton
Barlow
Beaulieu
Benzen
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Calkins
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Deltell
Doherty
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)
Finley

Albas
Allison
Arnold
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Caron
Chong
Christopherson
Cooper
Diotte
Dreeschen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fortin

Government Orders

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees to allow me to table a report from the human resources committee on seniors.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to revert to presenting reports from committees?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FIREARMS ACT

The House resumed from March 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons spoke recently on this matter, and there is a minute and a half remaining in questions and comments following his speech.

Questions and comments, the hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague from Manitoba a question about this legislation. Gang and gun violence is a problem in cities like Surrey and Toronto, and we even see it in Winnipeg, yet the legislation fails to even mention gangs or organized crime. In fact, it mentions registry and registration 26 times.

Could the member for Winnipeg North please tell us how this legislation will do anything to combat the real gun crime that is happening in Canada? That is not with law-abiding Canadians. That is with gangs and organized crime.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I had leave to give a detailed answer, I would love to provide all the details in answering that question. Having said that, it is really important that we look at Bill C-71 as another commitment made by the government and checked off, when the legislation ultimately passes. It is all about making Canadians safer, whether it is in urban or rural Canada. This is a good piece of legislation.

Interestingly enough, the Conservatives, who I hope will rethink their position, are trying to give the impression that they are going to be voting against it because retailers are going to be obligated to register serial numbers and so forth. Keep in mind that they have been doing that in the United States since 1968. In fact, the NRA supports retailers by providing them with leather-bound registration kits. Even before we had the long-gun registry, it was being done. I do not quite understand the logic.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill C-71. I will note that I will be sharing my time with the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

I am going to be very clear. I will not be supporting Bill C-71, and I will tell the House why. There are three basic reasons, although there is a whole list. I could probably give the House the top 10, but there are more reasons than that.

First of all, the Liberals cannot be trusted when it comes to firearms legislation that would do anything to get firearms out of the hands of criminals while at the same time protecting and respecting law-abiding Canadians. The Liberals cannot be trusted.

There is a statement we have all seen that is true, and that is that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. What have we seen from the Liberals when it comes to gun legislation? We all know about the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry that was introduced by the Liberals. They defended and supported it. It cost \$3 billion. It penalized and made criminals out of law-abiding Canadians.

That was the very first thing the Liberals did when they had a chance to do something to combat crime. Now they are back at it. They told Canadians that they were going to introduce a bill on firearms legislation.

The Liberals are having a lot of trouble right now around the disastrous India trip. They are having a lot of trouble because they are breaking promises. The Prime Minister is failing Canadians with his ethical lapses, so the Liberals had a brainwave and decided to go after law-abiding gun owners again; that would work.

As I said, the Liberals cannot be trusted. Gun owners know and Canadians know that the Liberals are going after them instead of going after the people who are actually committing crimes.

In 2009, I was a new member of Parliament, and I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-391, which would have ended the wasteful and ineffective long-gun registry. There were a whole lot of Liberal MPs who had told their constituents that they would vote to end the long-gun registry, and the first chance they had to fulfill their word, they did what Liberals do. They broke their promise, which would result in law-abiding Canadians being penalized. I want to remind the House of some of those members who broke their word and are here in this Parliament and will have to answer to their constituents.

For example, the member for Yukon broke his word to protect law-abiding Canadians. He supported the long-gun registry. The next one on the list I will not name. The third one is the member of Parliament for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame. He, as well, had an opportunity to support law-abiding Canadians. What did he do? He supported the long-gun registry. The member for Malpeque promised his constituents that he would vote to end the long-gun registry. What did he do? He supported the long-gun registry. The Minister of Public Safety himself, when he was part of the opposition, had a chance to end the long-gun registry. He voted for it and supported it.

Government Orders

One might ask why I am bringing this up now. As I said, the Liberals cannot be trusted. They want to target law-abiding Canadians, because it is easy. It is very easy to target people who are already obeying the law, people who get a license to own a firearm or store owners who already keep records. What easy targets for the Liberals. It is so easy to go after people, under the guise of doing something to combat gun crime, who are already following best practice and already obeying the law.

First and foremost, I do not trust the Liberals. I do not trust them on ethics. I do not trust them on balancing the budget. I do not trust them on keeping their word. I do not trust them when it comes to any kind of gun legislation that would do anything to penalize criminals.

Let us remember, the Liberals actually like to protect and reward criminals. It is quite interesting that we have returning terrorists who have been fighting with ISIS who are being protected. They are being told, "We believe in you. We think you can be rehabilitated." There is no legislation coming for ISIS terrorists who return to Canada. They will get a nice little group hug and probably more money. However, for gun owners and stores that sell firearms, like Canadian Tire, the government is coming after them.

• (1600)

People who have fought against our allies, like Omar Khadr, get a big payout. The Liberals had no problem just laying that down. Everything Omar wanted, he got. However, they are not standing up for gun owners. It is a whole lot of talk. The only people who actually get protection with the Liberal government are criminals. Therefore, I do not trust them.

I want to talk about the actual substance of Bill C-71, which is the same old, same old. There is nothing here that will protect anyone or do anything to fight crime.

Let us talk about the part of the legislation that will ask store owners to keep records. They are already keeping records. This is like a solution in search of a problem. Crimes are not being committed by people who are legally purchasing firearms. I will provide the statistics on that:

Analysis of a Special Request to Statistics Canada found that between 1997 and 2012, just 7% of the accused in firearms homicides had a valid firearms license (or 2% of all accused murderers).

A person in this country who has a licence to own a firearm is 50% less likely to ever commit a crime with a firearm. It is not like we have some big outbreak of people buying firearms at Canadian Tire and using those firearms in the commission of crimes, and Canadian Tire is saying to the police that it will not give them that information. That is not happening. That is not a problem that needs to be fixed.

I will tell members what is happening. I am going to refer to John Tory, the mayor of the city of Toronto. He noted that only 2% of gun homicide victims in Toronto had no connection to either gangs or drugs and that 98% of the crime that is going on has to do with gangs and drugs. That is where the problem is, and that is what needs to be addressed.

As I mentioned in my question earlier on, this bill does not even mention the words "gangs" or "organized crime". However, it does

mention words the Liberals love, like "registry" and "reference number", which is their new one, 26 times.

Let us be clear. As per the normal Liberal way of doing things, this is getting ready to create a backdoor registry, which will then very easily turn into the regular, wasteful, and ineffective type of registry the Liberals like to promote.

Some of my colleagues mentioned some of the areas where gangs are getting guns. Let us talk about this seriously. We need to get tough on gangs and on violent crime. When we were in government, there were a lot of things we did. We had the Tackling Violent Crime Act. It provided mandatory prison sentences for serious firearms offences and stricter bail provisions for those accused of serious offences involving firearms. It tackled the problem and did not go after law-abiding gun owners and store owners.

We passed the Act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to organized crime and the protection of justice system participants, which provides police officers and officials with important tools to help them fight organized crime.

Conservatives are the party of law and order. We believe that criminals and people who use guns in the commission of crimes should know that the penalty will be swift and just. We do not believe in attacking law-abiding Canadians who are using firearms for legitimate purposes, nor the store owners who are legally, and in a principled way, selling those firearms.

Because of all their failures and the problems they have encountered over the last number of months, the Liberals are trying to import a problem that is occurring in the U.S. The U.S. gun control situation is completely different from Canadian gun legislation. However, they are trying to bring that here and somehow say that they are fixing a problem that actually exists in the U.S. It is window dressing. It is disingenuous. It is the typical Liberals saying one thing and doing something completely different. It is bad legislation, and it should be revoked.

• (1605)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I want to tell the House about a mom and two teens, the Pejcinovski family, of Ajax, who were murdered on Wednesday, March 14, in a situation of domestic violence.

I want to remind all members that last November, the Minister of Public Safety introduced \$327million to combat guns and gangs. He held a summit in March prioritizing the violence of guns and gangs.

I am wondering what the member opposite will tell constituents in Ajax, or maybe her own constituents. What is so wrong with enhanced background checks for anyone who wants to purchase a firearm? What is wrong with confirming that the licence is valid? What is wrong with having vendors confirm and keep records, keeping in mind that this is not a registry and that one death from gun violence is one death too many?

Government Orders

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have been working on this file for many years and I am a big supporter of background checks. Anyone who threatens his or her spouse or has been involved in domestic violence absolutely should not own a firearm. However, the long gun registry did nothing to combat gun violence or domestic violence. In fact, the majority of women who were murdered, were murdered with knives, not with firearms.

Let us talk about domestic violence in an authentic way, and let us deal with it. It has to do with family issues and a lot of things that do not have to do with the actual weapon used in domestic violence.

A very good friend of mine was murdered by a gangster in early 2009. She was pregnant, she was almost ready to deliver her baby, and she was murdered by a gangster with a gun. Therefore, this is very real to me.

Nothing in this legislation, nothing in the long gun registry, nothing the Liberals have introduced has addressed that. Again, they want to coddle the criminal instead of dealing with it. Sometimes it is tough to deal with. It is tough to deal with a returning terrorist, but we have to address the problem and not send a red herring somewhere else to distract. This will do nothing to combat domestic violence. That is just the fact.

• (1610)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the work she has done on this issue. Over the years, her name, the name of Garry Breitreutz, and other come to mind.

I came into politics to get rid of Bill C-68 and the long gun registry. The day we did it as a government, my constituents were thrilled. We were frustrated with the cost of it. We were frustrated that it did not concentrate on crime, that it concentrated on legally owned firearms by farmers.

There are reasonable people in all parties and I would put out my plea to them. We have gun shows on weekends throughout my rural riding. These gun shows are for collectors who sell their firearms. People come from across Canada to these gun shows and from Consort, Hanna, Camrose, Castor, and many other places in my riding. Their frustration is with respect to the registration number. Every firearm sold has a licence to purchase it, but the idea that people will have to get hold of Miramichi or a gun group somewhere on a weekend to verify that licence, they know it will shut down these gun shows.

Would my colleague respond to that?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, we have numerous gun shows in my riding too. They are put on by incredibly responsible and respected people. The firearms that are purchased are not firearms being used in a crime.

Licences are already being checked, because in rural Canada people are responsible. They would never want to sell a firearm to someone who would not legally be able to own that firearm. It is the bureaucracy. We are going back to bureaucracy. We are going back to seeing law-abiding Canadians being bogged down in bureaucracy. Again, the problem is that nothing is happening to combat real gun crime in Canada.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to share the time with my esteemed colleague for Portage—Lisgar.

I rise to share the disappointment of tens of thousands of Canadians who are once again under attack by the government for being law-abiding citizens.

Bill C-71, the Liberals' new gun legislation, is a regulatory bill, not a public safety bill. The Liberal government is again ignoring anything to address crime and gun violence. What is apparent is that it was drafted without any thought of what this would do to law-abiding, gun-owning Canadians, like farmers, hunters, gun collectors, and sport shooters. There is nothing in this proposed legislation that addresses any of the problems facing Canadian families, police, rural communities, first nations, inner cities, border agents, gun violence, gangs, or rural crime.

Legislation should be about the values and merits of what Canadians need to improve their quality of life, protect their communities, empower people to prosper, not the Liberal Party.

We have heard what Canadians need for safer communities. In ridings like mine, with vast rural areas, police can sometimes be hours away. Rural Canadians often feel they are left to fend for themselves. With crime rates increasing in rural parts of Canada by 41% in the last few years, the bill would do nothing to address the needs of rural Canada. However, it has the potential to turn rural Canadians into criminals if they own a gun.

Many Canadians have a gun because they need it. They need it to deal with aggressive predators. They need it for their work, like farmers who may have to put an animal down or control rodents. Sadly, today, many Canadians feel they need these firearms to defend their homes, families, and property from violent attacks and criminal activities.

No one wins when those in rural Canada need to defend themselves from violent criminals. No one should be afraid in their homes, on their farms, or in their communities. However, this is the reality for far too many Canadians in rural communities in Alberta and across our great nation. The fact that this reality is ignored in this regulatory bill is a slap in the face for hard-working, gun-owning Canadians. The bill fails rural Canada and public safety.

Government Orders

As recent as a few weeks ago, we heard at the minister's own guns and gang conference about the challenges facing communities and police, with rising violent crime rates and, in particular, organized crime, guns and gangs. As a former police officer, I understand that police services are doing what they can with the resources available to them and with the many restrictions law enforcement have placed upon them. Criminals do not follow these rules.

We heard from the police at the summit about the increasing number of gangs that were involved in gun violence. These gangs are typically drug dealers or drug related and the shootings are related to protecting territory. These drug dealers and gang members have acquired guns through the black market, smuggling, and theft.

These people do not register their guns. They do not show a licence to buy it. They do not go through a background check. They do not submit to police scrutiny. Only law-abiding gun owners follow these processes.

Adding more processes and background checks does not improve the fight of our communities against gun violence and gangs. Nothing in the bill deals with gangs and their acquisition of illegal weapons. There is no mention of gangs, organized crime, or smuggling in the bill.

The legislation would do nothing to help rural residents in my community. It would do nothing for families dealing with gangs in Surrey. It would do nothing to help police in Montreal or the GTA. It would do nothing to combat illegal weapons coming through the black market, smuggled across our borders and into our cities. However, it would provide the Liberals with an ability to say that they tabled legislation, even if it really would not deal with the problem we face.

Here is what I am hearing from Canadians in response to this proposed legislation. How will Canadians be better off with the bill? The government has not provided any evidence that Canadians will be any safer. Why are Canadians who are law-abiding taxpayers being made to look like criminals, while criminals are not being dealt with? What the minister should be concerned about is real public safety issues in Canada, keeping guns away from gangs and violent criminals.

Bill C-71 would not address these issues. It would not make communities safer. It would not protect and save lives. To paraphrase the Prime Minister, it is purely a political game.

For example, the Liberals would remove the limit on background checks from five years to indefinite to meet their promise to enhance background checks. That seems logical and a good idea. However, what would aid Canadians and Parliament is having evidence that this would actually improve public safety. Currently, possession and acquisition licences for firearms must be renewed every five years. The government checks the registry automatically against criminal charges laid in Canada against anybody who had a licence, daily.

• (1615)

Are there Canadians who, in retrospect, should not be receiving gun licences? How would these changes improve public safety? Would longer background checks result in more people being denied guns for good reasons? A better question might be this. If we lift that five-year background check, what reasonable limits will be placed on it?

For example, for mental health screening, what mental health issues would make someone ineligible? What about recovery? Does a minor anxiety issue make one less or more likely to be blocked from hunting? If a veteran has returned from combat and has gone through a mental health issue or battled back from an illness like depression, what would the response be from the chief firearms officer? Would hunters who have gun licences and respect every aspect of our gun laws have their licences removed because of an incident that occurred 25 years ago?

It is not just the new licensing provisions we are hearing about from Canadians. It is the real fear that the Liberals are only looking to bring back a gun registry for unrestricted guns like hunting rifles. This is their fear. In fact, government members have been pushing one line over and over again, which is that this is not a gun registry. Well, that line is as believable as the Aga Khan being a close family friend, as believable as "these taxes will only affect the rich" or "It was India's fault".

When the Liberals keep telling the House and the public that something is not true, we all have reason to be cautious and scrutinize them carefully.

First, this bill makes specific reference to the "registrar". I think most Canadians would agree the point of a registrar is to keep a registry. The registrar will have a list of names of licence holders and require all gun sales to consult that list in advance of the sale. That registrar will require all businesses to keep a list of sales and make them available. The registrar will take the records of a gun shop going out of business and keep those records.

The Liberal government is now changing the rules to transport guns again as well. People taking unloaded and trigger-locked guns for repair will now require permission from the chief firearms officer to do so. Then there are the new costs, which have not even been addressed. It would be no surprise to anyone in Canada if the cost of gun licences will increase as a result of all the added red tape.

What should we be doing? There is a better way than ignoring the problem. We cannot address Canada's concerns for safer communities without addressing the cause of these problems. From my perspective, and those with whom I have spoken, there are a number of things the government can do that will have a far greater impact on reducing gun and gang violence in our communities.

Government Orders

Let us actually provide the police the promised funding and the plan for the \$327 million to tackle gangs and gun violence. Get that money into the hands of the specialized police units across the country to deal with guns, gangs, and drug traffickers. The RCMP has raised the issue of straw purchasers. Those are people who acquire guns with licences and then sell them on the black market. Instead of punishing law-abiding gun owners who follow the rules, let us empower the police and put in legislation to go after those criminals. We cannot licence the problem away.

Let us help our border agents. CBSA has had a battle, and is in a battle, of dealing with increased black market activities and tens of thousands of illegal border crossers, with no extra resources. Agents I have personally spoken to are exhausted. Let us enforce our border rules, remove illegal crossers, and give CBSA agents the tools to find illegal weapons being smuggled into the country. Let us cut off criminals from their supply of illegal weapons.

Let us focus on intervention programs that stop at-risk youth from entering gangs in the first place. The Conservatives launched these programs in 2006, and I would urge my government colleagues across the way to focus efforts on reducing the flow to new gangs and between gangs.

Finally, let us stop supporting terrorism, terrorists, and criminals and start taking the side of law-abiding Canadians. Law-abiding gun owners should be trusted above criminals.

This bill would hurt law-abiding, honest, hard-working gun-owning Canadians. I hope all members in the House will shift the focus to protecting Canadians by targeting criminals.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the government's answers to Questions Nos. 1501 to 1510.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for whatever reason, the hon. member did not mention the significant funding increases that the RCMP and CBSA have received under this government, after years of cuts by the previous government. However, I will not ask him about that.

I want to ask him about Ben Harvey. Ben Harvey is an owner of a gun shop in Belleville, High Falls Outfitters. He said:

There's a lot of moving parts in the proposed bill, but there's not been a real big change on the actual aspect of logging the customer's information and keeping on record what they've purchased. We already do it with ammunition, now they're just asking us to do it with guns. By doing it with guns we're going to give the police and the community the tool to begin to track where guns are purchased, how they're being trafficked and how they're being used, so that's not a bad thing.

Ben Harvey is a gun store owner. He knows that this is a public safety bill. Why does the hon. member not know that?

• (1625)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I think the reality that people have to face is that up until now, good business practice was for people to track their inventory, track whom it was sold to, and track what was sold. That was not a requirement by law. This legislation makes it a criminal offence if a gun shop owner does not do that, which means

that even an error made by these gun shop owners could result in a criminal offence.

This is a gun registry. I can have my own opinions. I have received thousands of pieces of correspondence in the last week from concerned citizens who, without exception, are fearful that this is nothing but a backdoor attempt at another gun registry, and we know how that one ended.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to ask a question of my hon. colleague, because this guy knows everything about that. My colleague was an RCMP officer with a great career, so he faced and had to deal with today's issue, the issue of this bill, throughout his professional life.

Based on that, I ask my colleague what he sees in this bill that can be changed to really address the threat and the problems that we have to face with the gun registry, especially with terrorists, and also the gangs that use weapons to attack people.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, there was a great opportunity here for the government to deal with a growing trend in this country, and that is the increased gun violence and increased homicide rate by gangs. It is causing fear in our communities.

This bill fails terribly to address that issue. It does not provide any additional legislation on dealing with smuggling to keep weapons out of the hands of criminals. It has nothing to do with improving CBSA access to tracking the smuggling of weapons. It has nothing to do with enhancing the Criminal Code to deal with those who commit criminal offences with a firearm. It is woefully lacking.

Members may want to call this a public safety bill. I am embarrassed to call it a public safety bill, because it really is not. As I said at the beginning of my speech, it is more of a regulatory bill. It does not address the issue of crime. It does not address the issue of organized crime. It does not address the issue of keeping guns out of the hands of criminals, because criminals do not follow the rules. They have not and they never will.

Therefore, we need to provide a way so that those criminals cannot have access to firearms with the ease with which they do now.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see this as a set of modest improvements. The member noted in particular the question of background checks. He said that this sounds like a good idea in principle but he has a lot of questions about it. We are at second reading, and committee is the perfect time to ask questions of experts on something that sounds like a good idea in principle.

Government Orders

Based on the comments I heard on background checks and the ideas that the member wants to put forward, surely this is something that should be sent to committee and that the member will support. Do I take that to be right?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that the bill is coming to our committee, the public safety and national security committee. There will be a lot of issues that we want to drill down in on that, absolutely including the whole issue of background checks. Whether we will get a real understanding, we do not know. However, I am hopeful that we will have a better idea of what these background checks are going to mean, what they would actually entail, and how they would impact law-abiding Canadians.

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 Rocky Ridge, Taxation; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Indigenous Affairs; and the hon. member for Sherbrooke, Canada Revenue Agency.

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

I am pleased to rise today and continue my participation in the legislative process to amend firearms regulation. I stand today as the representative of a largely rural New Brunswick riding called Fundy Royal, a riding where firearms are associated with hunting and sport. It is a riding where the vast majority of firearm owners are law-abiding, dedicated to the community, and very aware that there is growing gun crime in Canada, especially in big cities.

It is for this reason that when our party's 2015 election platform was introduced, which did include a section on gun control, I began consulting with those who were interested in the topic to ensure that I had considered it from many different perspectives, and also to counter the Conservative Party's narrative that the long gun registry would be reinstated. To clarify, Bill C-71 does not implement a gun registry, regardless of how many times that is said by the opposition.

When I was elected, I made a conscious decision to carry out my duties as a member of Parliament with the goal of listening and being persuasive rather than playing into partisan games to the detriment of my constituents. An example of my approach is my analysis and vote against Bill C-246, the modernizing animal protections act, because of the detrimental impact it would have had on our rural area.

I am glad to have been consulted by the Minister of Public Safety in advance of the tabling of Bill C-71, which allowed me to seek meaningful feedback from stakeholders in my riding, whom I now consider my firearms advisory council.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Ron Whitehead and the representatives from many of the sportsmen clubs and fish and game clubs in Fundy Royal for lending me their time and for providing candid feedback, which I was pleased to see had an impact on the drafting of this legislation. It has been my priority to identify the realities of firearm ownership in rural Canada, and to bring that perspective to be considered alongside urban concerns, which are legitimate and do need to be addressed.

In my riding, a firearm is seen as a tool. For generations, law-abiding Canadian gun owners have safely used their firearms for hunting and sport shooting, as well as predator and pest control. Canadian farmers, hunters, and sport shooters are among the most safety-conscious gun owners in the world.

This is in stark contrast to other cultures, where firearms are used as weapons. A weapon is something that is used with the intent to injure, defeat, or destroy. Our challenge is to address the crimes that are being carried out by weapons, while respecting law-abiding firearm owners. It is a fine needle to thread, but through consultation, I believe the minister has found that balance.

I am very pleased that the conversations I have had with my advisory council are reflected in the legislation as it was tabled. I would like to take a few minutes to reflect on what I heard from this group.

To begin with, there were several actions that we have already taken as a government that were well received by the council, for instance the recognition that Bill C-71 is part of a larger strategy to ensure that firearms do not find their way into unlawful hands. This is a strategy that has seen an investment of \$100 million each year to the provinces and territories to support guns and gangs police task forces to take illegal guns off our streets and reduce gang violence. It is a strategy that has modified the membership of the Canadian firearms advisory committee to include knowledgeable law enforcement officers, public health advocates, representatives from women's groups, and members of the legal community, to work alongside sport shooters and hunters. It is a strategy that has made investments in border infrastructure and technologies to enhance our border guards' ability to detect and halt illegal guns from the United States entering Canada.

The Fundy Royal firearms advisory council also brought forward the concept of taking a closer look at mental health to combat gun violence. It implored the government to make sure there are enough resources available to do thorough background checks and to find a way to identify red flags.

Bill C-71 proposes to strengthen background checks. Authorities determining eligibility would need to consider certain police-reported information, including criminal and drug offences, a history of violent behaviour, and mental illness spanning a person's life, rather than just the last five years. The licensees will continue to undergo eligibility screening, as they do today.

Through the course of my discussions with constituents, the following items each resulted in recommendations that I would like to bring to the attention of the minister and to our committee as we enter that part of the process.

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Currently, most gun retailers across Canada are keeping track of who buys guns and ammunition. Bill C-71 proposes to make that best practice standard across Canada. My constituents voiced concerned about the accessibility of the information gathered, and I am pleased to see that the bill requires law enforcement to have judicial authorization to attain this information in the course of an investigation.

• (1630)

Up until this point, legislation has required that only those licensed can purchase firearms and ammunition. However, there is no verification required. Bill C-71 proposes that the seller verify the validity of the licence to make sure that the licence is not under review or has not lapsed. I have heard from those in my constituency who are seeking clarification on how they would complete that verification, something many constituents assumed was already the current practice.

Canada currently issues an authorization to transport, or ATT, for the transportation of restricted and prohibited firearms. There will be no change for those who transport from home to an approved range in the owner's home province. However, to better track the movement of restricted firearms to gun shows, gunsmiths, across the border, or to other uncustomary locations, a separate authorization to transport would be required. I would ask the minister to consider a few points on this measure as well.

First is that consideration be given to including transportation to a gunsmith in the ATT. A firearm that is damaged or not functioning properly could be a safety hazard, and adding an additional step to transport the firearm for repair may not be in the best interest of public safety.

Second, I would like to recommend, on behalf of my constituents, that ample resources be committed to the Canadian firearms program so that the processing of ATTs and verifications of licences could be done in a timely and efficient manner so as not to impede the normal activities of firearms owners.

I think it is agreed in Canada that we all want to make our communities safe from the illegal possession and use of firearms. Doing so does not mean making radical changes or placing unreasonable measures on responsible firearms owners, but it does begin by recognizing that we have an issue. We may not in Fundy Royal, but it is happening in areas across Canada, and we must allow some flexibility to address the fact that there was a 23% increase in firearm-related homicides in 2016 compared to 2015. That is the highest rate since 2005. In 2016, shootings were the most common method of committing murder in this country, exceeding stabbings for the first time since 2012.

My family and I are blessed to have been born in Atlantic Canada, and I grew up in a time when the term "lockdown" did not exist. Kids today cannot say that. They practice them all the time. We really need to acknowledge that even in Atlantic Canada, 56% of violent gun crimes occur outside of cities.

I appreciate the approach taken by Robert Snider, president of the Moncton Fish and Game Association, in reviewing this legislation. He recently said in the *Times & Transcript*:

We have looked thoroughly at the recently introduced legislation and while we neither endorse the legislation nor vehemently oppose it, we have taken a more pragmatic, neutral position of "we can live with it" for now.

The legislation will have minimal or no impact on our members who hunt.

As I said before, from the beginning of my term I have worked to engage and listen to my constituents, concerned firearms owners, and stakeholders from across New Brunswick, and I can personally say that I have learned a great many things through those discussions. I was proud that the president of the Moncton Fish & Game Association chose to publicly compliment my approach, but I want to thank everyone who took the time to speak up.

At the end of this stage of debate, this legislation will proceed to the public safety committee, where MPs from both sides of the House will have an opportunity to hear from witnesses, stakeholders, and concerned Canadians. I very much believe that better policy will be achieved because of MPs speaking to their constituents, and I look forward to ongoing discussions on the path forward.

• (1635)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if a gunsmith is not the likely place to take a firearm, I do not know what would be. We would take a gun to a gunsmith for a variety of reasons. One may be for safety reasons, but this whole issue has been twisted around to say that we do not take a gun to a gunsmith. Where would we take a gun if we needed to have it repaired?

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I believe that a gunsmith is a reasonable place to transport a firearm, whether it be for repair or for other reasons. I would ask the minister and the committee to take a look at that issue in more depth and consider including that in the ATT.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention today on this important bill. I, too, see it as the right step in the right direction both to secure the opportunities for responsible gun owners to continue to participate in their sport and to strengthen our laws as they relate to guns and people getting access to guns.

One of the things the member brought up is that currently, there is only a five-year period the chief firearms officer has to look back in someone's past before making a decision. This legislation would strengthen that by looking back at someone's entire life.

I wonder if the member could comment on why she thinks that is important and a step in the right direction, given the fact that it is so important that we take a more holistic look at people's experiences throughout their lives before giving them the responsibility or the privilege of having a gun.

Government Orders

• (1640)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Mr. Speaker, as we look at this situation and the ways that we can try to limit gun violence, we do need to take that holistic approach. As we learn more about things that have happened in people's pasts, the ways that we react to that, the time frames for things like PTSD to set in, and those sorts of things, I think it is really important that we look at the whole picture.

Like I said, the board or council of people that I have been meeting with to discuss firearms brought this up as something that they believe would actually strengthen our firearms regulations. They were very much looking for common-sense ways to strengthen our firearms regulations, and this was one of the things they thought would be important. Therefore, I am pleased to see it in the legislation.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats welcome the tabling of this legislation and the fact that we have a few more hours to talk about it in the House. It is important and we want to make sure that we understand it. We are both protecting people, and representing rural areas and respecting the concerns of our constituents. Therefore, I am willing to support the bill to send it to committee to make sure that it has some common-sense elements in it.

One of the elements that looks like an improvement is the removal of the five-year limit on background checks. Therefore, for anybody who had a history of mental health problems or especially a record of domestic violence, a personal record check would be able to go back through the whole life of that person.

Could the member talk more about that element and what she is hearing in her riding about whether that is hitting the right balance for Bill C-71?

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart: Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a similar question to one I had earlier. I will reiterate that, as we take a look at ways we can decrease gun violence, one of the things we know is that it actually is not the tool sometimes that is the issue but the condition of the person who is using it.

To expand and take a more holistic look at those who are applying to have a licence for a restricted firearm, I think it makes sense to look further back than just the past five years. In fact, as we learn more about mental health and PTSD, it is something that we need to start considering in a deeper way as we move forward.

I look forward to the committee's work on this, and I am pleased to see it move forward to that stage, hopefully.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge that we are gathered here on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

Let me start by thanking the Minister of Public Safety and his parliamentary secretary, the member for Ajax, for their diligence and hard work in bringing forward Bill C-71. This commitment was made during our election in 2015, and I am proud to be part of a government that is following through on much needed changes to our gun laws.

There are two ways of addressing the issue of gun violence, and for that matter, violence as a whole. The first is to address the root

causes of violence. The roots of violence can be linked to many socio-economic conditions, and despite living in one of the most prosperous countries in the world, we know there is a lot of disparity between those who have and those who have not, and their outcomes in life. Be it education, health care, access to mental health support, we know that when young people find themselves in a conflict, they sometimes do not have the support to resolve issues in a peaceful way. Sometimes it is the local setting in individual communities that prevents them from moving forward.

We know our justice system has many issues. Most importantly, it has outcomes that are sometimes based on one's race. For example, young black men are more likely to end up in the justice system than their non-black counterparts. This is a result of racial profiling and anti-black racism that exists in all spectrums of the justice system.

As a government, we have to address these inequities, and to a large extent, we are doing that now. We are investing in much needed infrastructure, our Canada child benefit has lifted over 300,000 young people from poverty, and we are working hard to narrow social inequities. However, it is not enough. We have to address the real issue of guns in our communities.

The second issue I want to address is the guns themselves. The issue of gun violence is startling and the numbers really do speak for themselves. Over the past three years, Canada has seen a huge surge in gun violence. In 2016, there were 223 firearms-related murders in Canada, 44 more than the previous year. This represents a 23% increase in just one year. There were 2,465 criminal firearms in 2016, an increase of 30% since 2016. Looking at the issue with a gendered lens, from 2013 to 2016, the level of domestic violence against women where a gun was present increased dramatically from 447 incidents to 576.

The issue of gun violence is very personal to me. Over the past 20 years, I have been to way too many funerals of young people, mostly, of young racialized men who have died as a result of gun violence. My work against gun violence started in 1999 with an organization called CanTYD, the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre. CanTYD started off 20 years ago this past February with 17 young Tamil men and women who got together to respond to the many senseless deaths in our community. It was sparked by the murder of a young man called Kabilan Balachandran, a University of Waterloo student. He was murdered by a coward who picked up a gun and killed him.

Government Orders

CanTYD's work has been powerful and has led to an entire generation of young people moving away from violence to becoming productive citizens of our country. I had the privilege of being the coordinator of this organization from 2000 to 2002, and I cannot recount how many funerals I attended and how many young men I saw being buried. I would sometimes just sleep with my phone on Friday or Saturday night, waiting for a call. Oftentimes it would be from either Michelle Shephard from the *Toronto Star* or Dwight Drummond from *CityTV*, asking what was going on. These calls were punctuated with calls from young people who were either afraid, or just damn angry that yet another one of their friends was killed.

There were times when youth outreach workers and I would be at the Sunnybrook Hospital. We would see the headline in the *Toronto Sun* or the *Toronto Star*, that was when we would find out the person who was hospitalized as a result of a gunshot had actually died.

Working closely with many family members, siblings, school-mates, and parents moved me a great deal. I witnessed families change overnight, mothers who would wait in front of their windows for their sons to return home one day, knowing full well they had buried their sons, but hoping it was a dream, parents who never really got over the loss of their child.

● (1645)

Let me just take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, staff, board members, and the great many young people who have worked with and for CanTYD for the past 20 years. I want to thank the families who entrusted CanTYD with their children. It is because of the work of organizations like CanTYD that many young people have gone on the right path, including those who once picked up a gun. I wish CanTYD many more years of success in directing our young people.

Permit me to also thank all the great youth outreach workers and youth-serving organizations in Scarborough, many of whom I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with over the years.

Gun violence in the greater Toronto area continues to affect us all. My riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park has seen its fair share of gun violence in recent years, and shall I say, an unfair share of gun violence.

On July 16, 2012, the community at Danzig Road in Scarborough—Rouge Park got together for a celebration. Danzig is a vibrant community with a great deal of young people. In the early evening of that day, some young people came in a car and shot randomly at the crowd. Two people, 14-year-old Shyanne Charles and 23-year-old Joshua Yasay, died that day. Twenty-three people suffered injuries, making this the single largest mass shooting in the history of Toronto.

Sadly, this was not isolated. Just last year, during a weekend in July, three young men under the age of 35 were killed in Scarborough—Rouge Park by gun violence. Sadly, the spate of gun violence is expected to continue.

We have all seen recent accounts of young people in the United States, led by the young people of Parkland, Florida. It is not a right to own a gun in Canada. It is not a constitutional right to carry arms.

I have, sadly, been to way too many funerals of young people who died as a result of gun violence, and I cannot count the tears of these family members.

In the past year, I have met with members of the Zero Gun Violence Movement. The Zero Gun Violence Movement has been working since 2013 to bring awareness and advocacy to reduce gun violence in the city of Toronto and around the country. One of the disturbing trends that the founder, Louis March, consistently mentions each time we meet is that young people have clear access to guns. They know where to get them when they need them.

The Zero Gun Violence Movement, in recent years, has gathered the mothers who have lost their children to gun violence. I was inspired by the mothers who came to Ottawa recently. They spoke of their losses and hardships, and the anguish of burying sons, some of them fathers themselves. The entire family is crushed and is deeply affected by the personal loss of their child. The families are at a loss as to why governments have not moved forward in limiting access to guns. They have told me that in some places guns are easier to find than jobs. This is why we have to take ownership of this issue and find the right legislative tools to get guns off our streets.

Bill C-71 strikes a balance by respecting legitimate, law-abiding gun owners, and ensuring that minimum safeguards are extended to the public against the drastic growth of illegal guns.

I will summarize the five key elements of the legislation. First, the legislation will introduce enhanced background checks. Second, Bill C-71 will ensure that all individuals or businesses selling firearms verify that the buyer is legally able to buy a firearm before completing the transaction. Third, there is record-keeping and the tracing of firearms used in crimes. Fourth, the bill will reintroduce restrictions for transportation of prohibited firearms. Finally, fifth, it would remove the ability of cabinet to arbitrarily reclassify weapons.

Today we have the opportunity to take a path to limiting illegal guns and taking them off the streets, while ensuring that these laws do not affect law-abiding citizens. We cannot continue on the path of the U.S. where we see gun violence hold an entire nation hostage while the gun lobby refuses to regulate even the most dangerous of weapons.

As the member of Parliament of a riding where I have witnessed the deaths and destruction of young people and their families, I want to ask my colleagues of all parties to support this sensible legislation. I recognize that this alone will not solve the issue of gun violence, but I am confident that it goes far in taking guns off the street.

We must, however, continue to work to ensure that young people have the necessary supports to resolve conflict, seize opportunities, and move away from violence.

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•(1650)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to our hon. colleague, and I have a simple comment.

There has been a lot of debate going back and forth on Bill C-71. Of course, the government has shut down debate by forcing time allocation on this bill.

Reckless misinformation is being spread by our Prime Minister. I will read into the record a tweet made by our Prime Minister on March 20: “We’re also introducing stronger and more rigorous background checks on gun sales. And if you want to buy a gun, by law you’ll have to show a license at the point of purchase. Right now that’s not a requirement.”

That is a misleading statement. It is false. Of course, he sent that out.

I would like to ask our hon. colleague what his opinion is on our Prime Minister spreading misinformation, such as in that tweet, and targeting law-abiding gun owners.

•(1655)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I could tell the House about the number of mothers I have met in the last few years who have said to me that their son is dead because of gun violence.

It is very irresponsible for parliamentarians to stand here and play politics with a very important issue that fundamentally affects my riding, the people in my riding, young people in major cities. It is very unfortunate that this issue is being politicized.

What is important today is that we stand as a government to introduce very responsible legislation—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, order. I am trying to hear what the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park is saying, but there is shouting going back and forth. I do want to remind the hon. members that some words are unparliamentary, “liar” being one of them. I just want to remind them before they get in trouble and say something that could get them expelled from this honourable chamber.

Hon. member, please continue.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, it is also important that we, as parliamentarians, set an example for our young people. When we talk about young people who pick up guns, there is a reason they are unable to resolve conflict. Parliamentarians need to be quite responsible in the way they address very important issues, such as gun control.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do want to express my thanks to the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park for his remarks. What he illustrates to me is the importance of hearing the voices of members of Parliament on the impact of issues in their riding. I am very moved by the things he had to say about his involvement in trying to prevent gun violence.

I have to say I am very disappointed the government has used time allocation. As someone who taught criminal justice for 20 years and worked for a long time with police in my riding, and as a former

police board member, I would also like to be able to enter the debate on this bill. I am expressing my disappointment here that all voices will not get to be heard because the government has limited the time for this debate.

My specific question has to do with the issues around transportation of firearms. When I met with police in my riding, they were concerned that the automatic transfer permits not be a very large list, because it would encourage people to have firearms in their vehicles on more occasions. Therefore, those who break into vehicles and steal firearms would be given a lot more opportunities to get guns on the street.

It was not about worrying about the legitimate firearms owners. The police said they were worried about too many weapons in vehicles, which could then be seized by others who would use them for negative purposes.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments. I will be very frank. I am not an expert in firearms. Therefore, I will take that back to the minister and advise him to get back to the member.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that one of the reasons I believe moving time allocation was necessary, and I was not part of making that decision, was that there were antics being put forth by the opposition repeatedly to shut down debate on this. This is the only way we have been able to force an actual debate to happen. I find it very discouraging.

The member for Scarborough—Rouge Park told a real story about why this is such an important matter to him, and the Conservatives used it as an opportunity to criticize the Prime Minister about a comment that he made.

One of the things that we have seen coming forward from this legislation is the divide between whether or not this will really work, whether or not improving the gun legislation will work, or whether we should be fighting the actual criminals, and enhancing crime legislation, like the Conservatives repeatedly put forward.

Given the member's experience, would he agree that this is solid legislation that will have an impact? Are we moving in the right direction? Should we be doing what the Conservatives have been putting forward, which is to make other laws as they relate to criminal activity stronger?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, this is part of a broader set of issues that are required to support young people.

This particular legislation would get guns off the street, but it needs to be coupled with the Canada child benefit and other infrastructure support. This would allow young people to be able to focus on their life as opposed to getting involved in violence. I believe the government is already going in the right direction.

•(1700)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I have any extra time, I want to share it with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Government Orders

The member for Scarborough—Rouge Park talked about the number of mothers in his riding and other Canadians who have been fundamentally affected by gun violence. He must be bitterly disappointed in the bill that has come forward, because it never mentions the words “gangs” or “criminal organization”. These words never come up in the bill and yet he is talking about how he wants to see those kinds of things being impacted.

He is not the only one on the Liberal side, I am sure, that is disappointed with the bill. The members of the Liberal rural caucus have failed to protect their constituents one more time.

Here we are talking again about a Liberal-imposed gun registry. The Liberals' commitment was to deal with guns, with gang violence, and with illegal activity. This legislation would not deal with any of that.

Some familiar patterns are taking place here. Over the last while, Liberal members have been playing it easy. They want to take the easy way out. They take an initiative and when the pressure is on, they drop it. We saw that with electoral reform. We saw it with tax hikes on small businesses. They often make up phony statistics to try to make things more palatable to Canadians.

We also see them deliberately dividing Canadians in the hopes of getting some political gain. We have watched them try to isolate small groups to get some advantage. We saw that in things like the carbon tax and recently the summer jobs program. They use selective or misleading information to try to create an opportunity to advance their issues.

The Liberals want to go easy on the laws that they do not want to actually enforce. We have seen that through bills such as the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. We have seen it on immigration, where they ignore the rules and will not enforce the rules as they are put in place. We saw it again obviously with respect to the payment to Mr. Khadr, when they jumped ahead of the court and decided to make a payment because the Chrétien government would have looked bad if they had not done that.

It looks like all of those bad habits have come together in Bill C-71. The Liberals are trying to manipulate the Canadian public. They are trying to work PR angles on this with information that they know is untrue. They are using this to divide Canadians one more time. They are taking the easy way out by avoiding the real issues, which are gang violence and illegal gun activity. The Liberals are doing what they said they would not do, which is setting up the basics of a renewed long gun registry.

The way this bill was introduced showed us that the Liberals are deliberately trying to set up legitimate firearms owners as the fall guys. Someone mentioned the Prime Minister's tweet a few minutes ago. The press release that came out with the bill is another example. Part of it declares that in Canada, restricted firearms are made up of “handguns, certain rifles, and semi-automatics”. I do not know if members know about firearms laws in Canada, but this is inaccurate. It is a complete fabrication about semi-automatics. This may be the goal of the government today but that is not what the legislative reality is. Canadian firearms owners need to pay attention to this early misinformation.

That is not the only misinformation that was presented. CBC, of all organizations, did an analysis of the statistics used by the Liberals in their press release and their communications. The Liberals focused on 2013. CBC reported that 2013 saw Canada's lowest rate of criminal homicide in 50 years, the lowest rate of fatal shootings ever recorded by Statistics Canada. Every year since 1966 has been worse than 2013. The Liberals took a year when all the stats were lower than they have been for decades and they used that to compare to today, and today is still below the 30 year average. Just a few minutes ago a Liberal member actually used those statistics again.

The CBC report goes on to talk about Canada's homicide rate. It said that the rate in 2018 is similar to or lower than it was in 2008 or 1998. It is well below 1988 and 1978. It is similar to what it was in 1968. The rate today is very close to that in 1928. It goes on to say that if one were to ask how 2016 compared with the decade before, one would find the rate of firearms homicides remains boringly unchanged, including the rate of homicides with handguns. I am sure some members have been taken with that article and have read it through as well.

The CBC report concluded that none of this constitutes as they call it a “steady increase”. The CBC said that this is what a statistician might reasonably call a steady decrease.

It is not accurate to say that offences involving firearms have become more prevalent, especially since 2013.

That is not the only place where the Liberals have been misleading Canadians. There is a second media report. The CBC, after the government briefing I assume, stated, “Police will be able to determine who exactly was the last licensed firearms owner to purchase a particular gun.” If the government has the capacity to track the last legitimate owner of every firearm in Canada, that actually accomplishes the goals of a firearms registry.

● (1705)

Are the Liberals setting up a gun registry or are they not? They have given up on gangs and they are ganging up on Canadians. In this process they need to distort the facts or they know that Canadians will not accept that. The bill itself is a lot of nothing and what is there for the most part is targeting legitimate gun owners and business people as it lays the foundation for a new registry.

Again, the CBC article says that every firearm will be tied to its owner. That is not possible unless the government uses a new reference number system, which we will talk about in a couple of minutes, to track individuals and their firearms. People need to pay attention to this. This is the foundation for establishing a registry. It lays out the components of a registry. There is a front door registry by returning all the data to Quebec.

Government Orders

Canadians also need to ask if any other data exist, because in the legislation it says that the changes that we made will be designated to have never existed. If there is other data that exist, are the Liberals going to bring that back and use that across this country? We need to know that. Some people should start taking a closer look at this.

It sets up a backdoor registry. In the past when people purchased a firearm they had to verify that the other person had a licence. Businesses have put that number on file and everyone I have ever dealt with has done that. Adding new requirements, such as the reference number, the serial number, the buyer and a 20-year hold, allows for the establishment of a gun registry. The reference number for private transactions is even more interesting because it actually makes no sense. It will not be one single bit effective unless it is the first step in requiring the private registration of firearms. Again it is a registry.

This needs to be understood. It has a pile of consequences. It has consequences regarding the invasion of privacy, the question of financing the register, and the entire reference implementation and how it is being put together.

I talked to a friend who has been involved in this for a while and he said this new set-up is going to require hundreds of employees in order to handle these reference numbers. I would like to know what the budget is. Is it perhaps \$2 million like the last one? What number will that grow to? We need to know that quickly.

The provision on background checks requires the examination of extended time periods on the application process. It is okay, but is it really effective? Those background checks are already very thorough.

I want to wrap up by saying that this bill divides Canadians on bad assumptions. The manipulated data make it look like there is a growing problem when there is not one. The legislation targets only legitimate firearms owners and marks them. The Liberals have avoided the hard work because gang issues are hard to deal with. Regular Canadians are a lot easier to beat on.

The Liberals have come forward with a phony piece of legislation. It sets the groundwork for a front door registry and a backdoor registry. It uses deliberately distorted statistics to scare people. None of us knows what it will cost. It will make it more expensive and inconvenient for honest people. It will lay the groundwork for the registry in Quebec and the foundation for a registry across this country. It picks out legitimate firearm owners and does not deal with the problems the Liberals claim they are trying to address.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks a lot about misinformation. Of course, we cannot accuse the Conservatives of blowing things way out of proportion. That would never happen. That is not something they would do.

However, a Belleville newspaper reporter spoke to Ben Harvey who is a gun store owner and said:

There's a lot of moving parts in the proposed bill, but there's not been a real big change on the actual aspect of logging the customer's information and keeping on record what they've purchased. We already do it with ammunition, now they're just asking us to do it with guns. By doing it with guns we're going to give the police and the community the tool to begin to track where guns are purchased, how they're being trafficked and how they're being used, so that's not a bad thing.

It seems Ben from Belleville who owns a gun shop thinks this is public safety legislation and is a good step forward. This is common sense gun control. Why are the Conservatives engaging in misleading Canadians on this issue?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Liberals are not actually dealing with the issue they claimed they were going to address which was gang violence and illegal gun activity. We know that the majority of that problem comes from smuggled guns and from firearms that have been stolen. This has nothing to do with that.

Even the member's question seems to be implying that they are going to be establishing a gun registry and that it is an important thing for them to do. Canadians across the country need to pay attention to the questions they are asking. They need to pay attention to the reference numbers that are going to be required for every single firearm transaction. Are the Liberals setting up a gun registry as they promised they would not do, or what is it that they are doing?

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since I will not have time to speak, I will ask my colleague a question.

When the bill was introduced, the minister said that it would take firearms owners three to five minutes to make a call and that an official would be able to authorize them almost instantly to walk around with their restricted firearms.

It currently takes 45 minutes to get through to the Canada Revenue Agency by telephone, and people still do not always get an answer. Furthermore, the call centre is not open on weekends and, as my colleague was saying, people move around, and there are shows and all kinds of events across Canada. People are unable to reach officials by telephone on the weekend. It is unrealistic to think otherwise.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I talked to a person who had been involved in this business for a while. He said that no one could get a response on the weekend. It was impossible to get a response. Now the government is telling us that every gun show across the country, every place that people go where they might be exchanging or buying firearms or whatever, are going to have to call in and get a reference number. However, no one is working.

Government Orders

As I mentioned earlier, someone who has been involved in this for a long time with the other gun registry said that this will require the hiring of hundreds of people to make this work. It will not be instantaneous. The authorization to transport typically will take two to three days. If that is the case, it will destroy the gun shows on which so many people across the country depend.

Also, I am very sorry that my colleague probably will not get his time today because of the time allocation motion the Liberals have brought in on Bill C-71. We are very sad to see the fact that our members are being muzzled because the Liberals do not want to have a discussion about these issues.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across the way talked about being muzzled. However, just the other day the government brought in Bill C-71 and wanted to have a debate on it. One speaker from the Conservative Party addressed the bill and then moved to adjourn debate. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the debate ended that day.

Now the Conservatives want to play games and so forth. However, the legislation is about public safety for Canadians. A commitment was made to Canadians in the last election and this government is fulfilling it. Even the NRA supports parts of the bill, which the Conservatives oppose. No one is saying that this is about the long gun registry. It is not about that. However, no matter how many times we say it, the Conservatives want to twist it into something it is not.

Would the member not concede that maybe the NRA's position on the bill of having the retailers record the information is a responsible approach? Why are the Conservatives even further right than organizations like the NRA?

Mr. David Anderson: I think the NRA operates in the United States, Mr. Speaker.

The member across the way mentioned the long gun registry, but of course he does not want to talk about it. It cost the Liberals an awful lot in the past Parliament, and it will cost them again in the next election. He does not want the discussion to be about whether they are establishing a registry or not.

The reality is that the Liberals are not keeping their promises. The bill is not about public safety. The bill is about some sort of public relations campaign in which they are targeting legitimate firearm owners because they do not want to deal with gang violence. They do not want to deal with illegal gun activity, so they have chosen to avoid it one more time.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, March 27, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

●(1715)

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

●(1750)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 644*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Caron	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr

Private Members' Business

Garneau
Gerretsen
Goodale
Hajdu
Harvey
Hogg
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khera
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCrinmon
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Ste-Marie
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Yip

Garrison
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Graham
Hébert
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Kwan
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Moore
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Picard
Quach
Ramsey
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Stetski
Tan
Thériault
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Young — 206

Finley
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Jeneroux
Kent
Kmiec
Lake
Leitch
Lloyd
MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Rempel
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Hoback
Kelly
Kitchen
Kusie
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz
Nicholson
O'Toole
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer — 88

PAIRED

Nil
The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed from March 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-344, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (community benefit), as reported (without amendment) from the committee, be concurred in.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in Bill C-344 at report stage.

● (1800)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 645)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Bennett
Bibeau

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Beech
Benson
Bittle

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif
Albrecht
Anderson
Barlow
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Carrie
Clarke
Deltell
Doherty
Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)

Albas
Allison
Arnold
Benzen
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Calkins
Chong
Cooper
Diotte
Dreeshen
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast

Private Members' Business

Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Choquette
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Drouin
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Garneau
 Gerretsen
 Goodale
 Hajdu
 Hébert
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 Leboutillier
 Leslie
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Mathysen
 May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
 McDonald
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Moore
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rota
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Stetski

Blair
 Boissonnault
 Boulерice
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chen
 Christopherson
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Dubé
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Graham
 Harvey
 Hogg
 Housefather
 Hussien
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khera
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Levitt
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Monsef
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 Ng
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Picard
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Tabbara

Tan
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Yip

Tassi
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Young— 200

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Anderson
 Barlow
 Benzen
 Berthold
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
 Boucher
 Calkins
 Chong
 Cooper
 Diotte
 Dreeschen
 Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
 Fast
 Fortin
 Généreux
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Jeneroux
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Lake
 Leitch
 Lloyd
 MacKenzie
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Paul-Hus
 Poilievre
 Reid
 Richards
 Scheer
 Shields
 Sopuck
 Ste-Marie
 Stubbs
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warawa
 Webber
 Yurdiga

Albas
 Allison
 Arnold
 Beaulieu
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Block
 Brassard
 Carrie
 Clarke
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Eglinski
 Falk (Provencher)
 Finley
 Gallant
 Genuis
 Godin
 Hoback
 Kelly
 Kitchen
 Kusie
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Maguire
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Motz
 Nicholson
 O'Toole
 Puzé
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Shipley
 Sorenson
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Wong
 Zimmer— 92

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker:

I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1805)

[English]

CANADIAN JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

The House resumed from March 27 consideration of the motion that Bill S-232, an act respecting Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill S-232, under private members' business.

• (1810)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 646)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barlow
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Cooper
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeschen
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseauit
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Egliniski
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Gallant	Garneau
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Gladu	Godin
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gourde	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Hoback	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Johns

Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leitch	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Malcolmson
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Monsef	Moore
Morrissey	Motz
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nater	Nault
Ng	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	O'Toole
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Paupé
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Picard
Poilievre	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Saroya	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schieffe
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shiple
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Sorenson
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Thériault	Tilson
Tootoo	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Vecchio	Viersen
Virani	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Webber	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 294

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Nil

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:13 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

* * *

● (1815)

RURAL CRIME

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC) moved:

That the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be instructed to undertake a study on rural crime in Canada and consider factors, including but not limited to: (i) current rural crime rates and trends, (ii) existing RCMP and other policing resources and policies in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, particularly in relation to population density, policing geographic area, and staff shortages, (iii) current partnerships with provincial, municipal, and Indigenous police forces, (iv) possible recommendations to improve rural crime prevention and to curb emerging crime rates, and that the Committee report its findings to the House within six months of the adoption of this motion.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am honoured to speak to Motion No. 167, which urges the public safety and national security committee to convene a comprehensive and current assessment on rural crimes in communities across Canada.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Alberta rural crime task force for all of its advocacy.

Rural crime affects constituents from across our ridings. Rural Alberta MPs have been working with provincial and municipal representatives and citizen groups to hear from victims of crime, law enforcement, and sometimes even offenders, to identify concrete actions to reduce rural crime and to protect the rights of victims. I know rural MPs across all of Canada, and of all parties, hear the same concerns from their constituents.

Lakeland constituents feel unsafe in their homes and at work because of escalating robberies, thefts, and break-ins in small towns, family farms, and businesses. The motion is a first step to making concrete recommendations to improve rural crime prevention and to reduce escalating crime rates.

Motion No. 167 calls for an assessment of those trends of crime rates in rural Canada, because 2015 was the first time police reported crime in Canada went up in over a decade, the first time in more than 12 years. It increased again in 2016. Therefore, the experiences of our constituents in rural Alberta, and of people across Canada, are clearly reflected in the official statistics. Many are frustrated and rightfully angry. Many have been victims repeatedly and with increasing violence.

My constituent Barbara said, "Once you tell your personal story of a break-in almost everyone you meet can offer up their own, so you're right when you say there has been a substantial increase in these incidences, and we're all scared and frustrated."

Canada is clearly in need of a formalized, in-depth assessment on rural crime in order to get the statistics to make tangible recommendations for concrete action to combat this crisis. Both the analysis and the action must be swift because it is urgent.

My constituents do not want studies or reports forever; they want action. However, because the notable escalation of crime is relatively recent, it is a fact that a comprehensive investigation of all factors has not actually yet been undertaken federally. Motion No. 167 is at least a measure I can suggest as a private member to get rural crime on the federal agenda.

One of my constituents, Colleen, says, "Everyone in our area is very, very concerned about rural crime and personal safety.... Neighbours all around us have had vehicles stolen or their houses broken into...it is an epidemic."

From central Alberta, Rose says, "If we do not feel safe in our own homes, then there needs to be an establishment of why we do not feel safe."

Ben told me, "As a rural property owner, we are completely frustrated. To date we have lost three vehicles, huge amounts of diesel fuel, several batteries, tools, money, credit cards and precious family heirlooms".

Feedback from some RCMP members in Lakeland reported increases of 80% in property crime, 58% in vehicle theft, and 105% in property theft under \$5,000. In fact, property crime in rural Alberta alone increased by 41% in the last five years, while the population only went up 8%.

Kevin in Lakeland says, "Unfortunately, there are a lot of people in our area who have personally been impacted by thefts, break and enter, and damage caused by those who would seek to take things that do not belong to them".

Jennifer says, "I know more people who have been robbed than who haven't. It is beyond disheartening and unbelievably unfair. We are sitting ducks due to our location and an understaffed detachment."

Brad, describing an incident near his farm, says, "The police came up the next day to take a report...moral of the story is that I came to the conclusion that the only one who can protect my family where we live is me, and after my neighbours are phoned I might call the police. And unfortunately I will be the 'bad guy' when they finally arrive here."

This is happening all too often. Rural crime across Canada was led by a 10% spike in Alberta, but it increased all across western Canada, in New Brunswick, and the Northwest Territories. A recent RCMP report said that property crime in rural Alberta had reached levels never before seen in recent history.

Private Members' Business

Policing in rural areas is vastly different than urban centres. The St. Paul region in my riding has been hit hard with crime, and it has the highest number of cases of any crown prosecutor office in Alberta, with 2,000 cases back-logged, compared to an Edmonton office with 800.

Just as there are unique challenges with the court system in rural Canada, so too are there challenges with policing rural crime. The committee would examine RCMP staff resources and policies in rural, remote, and indigenous communities in relation to population density, geographic area, and staff shortages.

That is why Motion No. 167 also calls for an examination of current partnerships with provincial and municipal police.

• (1820)

Currently, most rural areas across Canada are policed by the RCMP, except in Quebec and Ontario, which have provincial police forces. The RCMP provides specific federal policing services there as in the rest of the country. Many larger cities and districts have their own municipal police forces. However, more than 150 municipalities, three international airports, and 600 indigenous communities have contracts with the RCMP for local services.

The RCMP has thousands of kilometres to cover and very limited resources. Even a lack of cellphone coverage and road conditions with no street lights over great distances impact response times. As a result, constituents are left vulnerable.

Candace says, “We operate a substantial farm which is our livelihood. Our shop was broken into. The tractor trailer cab interiors messed. Registrations, glasses, CDs, paper files etc. There were excellent footprints and the RCMP showed up a week later.”

A member of that same family down the road just this weekend had his truck stolen by three criminals while his kids were in the yard. It is scary, because if anything had happened, the RCMP to be dispatched are 60 kilometres away.

Across Canada, RCMP members themselves say they are concerned about their own safety and about the safety of the communities in which they work across Canada.

For example, in Lakeland, one detachment has only four RCMP members to cover 2,200 square kilometres and 8,300 Albertans. The reality is that two of them are rarely on duty at the same time and one often is in the office doing administrative duties.

Nationally, more than one in 10 RCMP positions are vacant. As of April 2017, 230 positions are unfilled in Alberta.

Caroline says, “I had a neighbour who called the RCMP after they had a break-in. RCMP never came that day. Never came the next day. Never came at all.”

Currently in Saskatchewan, the RCMP has approximately 925 members working out of 87 rural detachments under community policing agreements. Another 250 officers are based at larger municipal RCMP detachments and 33 are involved in community policing arrangements with Saskatchewan first nations.

In Manitoba, RCMP detachments have been struggling for years with vacancies that have constrained policing services to rural and indigenous communities.

The problem of employment fatigue in the RCMP is a national concern and it is particularly acute in Manitoba. The result is reduced safety and protection to rural and indigenous people, eroded morale, and increased stress for RCMP members.

RCMP members express significant concern for the mental and physical well-being of their colleagues. This highlights a key concern identified by law enforcement stakeholders that a broad public awareness of dwindling policing resources can reasonably generate public unease and embolden criminals.

All of us here today respect the hard work and sacrifice of the RCMP. A thorough and up-to-date assessment will help determine specific resource requirements and actions needed to serve and protect rural communities and about whether recent announcements have made measurable differences.

Residents and businesses in small towns and rural areas across Lakeland say that they expect break-ins and robberies. They are taking action to protect themselves, setting up buddy systems with neighbours, rural crime watches, and citizens on patrol.

One resident said, “We have a security system, but that doesn't help much when it takes the RCMP too long to get there.”

Small business retention is becoming a major challenge in rural communities plagued by rampant crime. Small businesses are vital to Canada's economy, especially in rural areas with limited employment.

For years, small businesses have been broken into and with escalating violence like armed robberies of the Boyne Lake General Store, the Vegreville Hotel, the Bonnyville liquor store, the butcher shop in Eckville, and a sporting goods store in Caroline. Businesses are contacting their counties because they have been broken into so many times that their insurance companies are now refusing them.

On January 28, *The Globe and Mail* reported on small business retention in rural Canada. It said:

Farmers and business owners who've been hit multiple times say they are surprised by the brazenness of recent property crimes—thieves come looking for electronics, farm equipment or guns, even when someone is home.

However, the question is clear. What incentive is there for business owners to remain in rural areas? It may now be costing them more to stay open than not. Businesses and employees must be able to thrive in rural Canada, not be driven out by criminals and repeat offenders. The rights of law-abiding business owners and residents everywhere must be prioritized over the rights of criminals.

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The analysis mandated by Motion No. 167 can deliver the statistics and context to clearly establish all the factors behind the increase in rural crime.

Many municipal associations and municipalities across Canada want action. The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities recently called for stiffer penalties for those convicted of rural crimes, restrictions on access to rural properties, increased RCMP resources to deal with agriculture-related thefts in rural areas, and expanded rights and justification for individuals to defend or protect themselves, their family, and their property.

My constituents want stronger penalties to stop the revolving door of repeat offenders. Because they are left without RCMP able to get to them fast enough, they fear they are in a no-win situation if they are forced to defend themselves, their family, their homes, property or businesses.

● (1825)

Silke said, "With every strange noise we look out the window and a false alarm from our shop sensor gives us adrenaline overload. Every slow-driving vehicle makes our hairs stand up and in general everyone in the neighbourhood is on edge."

Caroline said, "I had a neighbour who was at home with her five children. There were people in the yard and all she could do was let them snoop. They had a vehicle waiting on the other side of the treeline. This sort of thing has been, and in my opinion, will continue to escalate." She asks what our government's first job is, if not to protect its citizens.

Monique said, "Any time I am returning home, kids are in school, husband is at work, I'm nervous, cautious, and scared. Will I drive up to find we are the next victims, and worse yet, will I catch them in the act? That puts me in between them and their escape route. Then what? It's flight or fight for both of us. Guaranteed I will be unarmed. Never in my life did I think that things would shift from urban being safer than rural. We chose rural to feel safer. Now we are targets, sitting ducks so to speak."

The rise in rural crime has coincided with the escalating opioid crisis in Canada. In 2016, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon rated among the highest in the country for apparent opioid-related deaths per 100,000 people, and exceeded the rest of the provinces in terms of fentanyl deaths. That coincides with the increase in rural crime. Multiple first nation communities have declared states of emergency in response to the uptick in opioid overdoses, during which crime rates began to soar.

All members and parties have been strong advocates for action on the opioid epidemic in Canada, and while there are many related factors to ponder, this motion will be an opportunity to enable the appropriate committee to assess this urgent issue in that context: the concurrent increase in opioid use and rural crime.

Some law enforcement officials cite the challenges and resourcing of RCMP in rural areas as a factor in escalating drug-related crimes, and of increasing activities of organized crime in rural areas. Overall, a major problem is that there are so many unanswered questions. This motion is a first step for the federal government to explicitly acknowledge this urgent issue, and to start moving the levers to address it and take action.

Kevin said, "This experience really traumatized me, as well as my wife Lexie, who was at home only a hundred feet from the shop with our four young children when these individuals were here. We don't live close to neighbours, about two kilometres, and for the last two years we have had to change much about how we live out here. It really impacted us and has made us wary about living in an isolated area, even now two years after the incident", when they were robbed. He continues, "Some of the items stolen were irreplaceable, and the loss of security we feel has certainly been felt by our whole family."

Sharon said, "I have never been afraid to stay alone on our acreage and hardly ever locked a door. Now all doors on this property are locked, we have yard lights, motion lights...an alarm system. Still, I don't feel safe. The police are so thinned out for this big country that they can't help taking sometimes a couple of hours to respond to a call. I am a 75-year-old woman and it is just wrong that I should have these fears as a free Canadian."

Judy said, "This is not fair that I have to live in fear with gates locked, phone by the bed, and awakened at every noise! This is not the Alberta I know and love."

These voices are echoed by thousands in rural communities across Canada. It does not discriminate between regions or party lines and it affects everyone. A core duty of government is public safety and security. Constituents should get the safety they deserve.

The results of this assessment would directly affect all rural communities across Canada and benefit every rural constituency should this motion be adopted. Therefore, I urge all members of the House to pass Motion No. 167. As Darcy from Lakeland said, let us make rural life safe again.

● (1830)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the privileges of sitting in the House is listening to the experiences from different parts of the country that are quite clearly different from the experiences we may have in our own home ridings. To hear documented the very real concerns, the very real needs of communities in rural Canada enlightens us all. I want to thank the member for raising the issue and bringing it to the attention of all parliamentarians. We have a shared responsibility in this country to make the streets of my riding as safe as the back roads of my colleague's riding. I assure her that she does not stand alone in the desire to change this circumstance.

As a former member of the police service board in Toronto, and as someone who has been involved in the municipal sector for quite some time, my question to the member is this. As the cities, towns, and rural municipalities speak about this issue, what resources are they prepared to partner with us? Has she canvassed the rural municipalities and the associations, like the ones in Alberta and Saskatchewan, to see what kinds of partnerships are possible around data collection, the studying of this issue, and making sure that our response is as robust as it could be?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question, and by his question, I am hopeful about the potential for this motion to pass and for this critical assessment to be undertaken.

I can speak with respect to the municipal councils in my riding. There is one county council that has one of the detachments with the most severe shortages. They have been working both with the provincial government and with the umbrella municipal association to find ways they can contribute. They have offered to invest in additional staffing to add administrative support to the detachment so that officers could potentially be on duty together covering their large areas. I think that my colleagues in the Alberta rural crime task force, through their work across the province, have heard similar kinds of intents from municipalities, because everybody just wants to work together to find solutions and take action against this crisis.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague to comment on the recent announcement of investment from the Alberta provincial government by the justice minister, Kathleen Ganley, of \$10 million to fight rural crime, and she announced a seven-step plan at the same time.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, any action to combat rural crime and increase police resourcing in rural communities is welcome.

This motion, if it passes, comes at an excellent time, because the NDP government of Alberta did announce a \$10 million investment and 39 additional RCMP officers. If this assessment can be undertaken, then six months from now, we should be able to review that investment and see if it has resulted in additional officers in local detachments. I would say that is exactly the kind of thing that this motion would enable to be reviewed to see if there is actually a measurable outcome or difference in combatting rural crime. As well, there is the federal Liberals' recent announcement of increasing funds for indigenous policing in rural communities across Canada. These are exactly the kinds of things that this motion would allow the appropriate committee to look at and to assess for real action.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward. I have served on the Alberta rural crime task force. The member has worked very closely with us, and I appreciate that.

On the stories the member has shared today here in the House, all members of Parliament, especially rural members from Alberta and Saskatchewan, can share similar types of stories. However, as we conducted our meetings throughout the riding, I realized that many of my constituents were living in fear, and she brought that out very well in her speech.

Also, many of my constituents were uncertain as to what their response should be when, not if, they were broken into. Living on a

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ranch and a farm, I have been a victim to a very small degree with having fuel stolen. Someone came in and ripped a line off of a piece of equipment, broke the fuel pump, and did other things.

I wonder what the member has heard from the government. Are government members going to be supporting her bill? What timelines would be involved in this study? What could go on after the study? Is this the type of recommendation that could work together with provinces, as the member from the NDP shared, or is this something that would eventually come back to committee and be studied?

This is a non-partisan issue. Can the member share on that?

• (1835)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I do not know yet whether the Liberals will be supporting the motion, although I have sent out a package and talked to many of the rural members. I know that they are as concerned about these issues as we are.

Part of the reason the motion has a six-month timeline is that I am hoping the committee can assess all of these areas and then come back with recommendations in a timely way so that action can be taken immediately. I know that my constituents, like all of ours, do not want to see government just meet forever, write reports, and do studies when they face this urgent crisis in their lives every day.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Lakeland for her important motion. Certainly there is no question that crime wherever it happens is unacceptable and that those who are the victims of crime suffer enormously. One of government's main responsibilities is to stop that suffering in any way that we can.

The point that is made around the rural context is one she is absolutely right about. We know that rural areas are often near the top of Statistics Canada's crime severity index and across the country in rural communities property crimes are plaguing these communities in a way that is utterly and totally unacceptable.

We agree fully and we think this is an area where it is essential that we have bipartisan co-operation to find ways to reduce this scourge so that we do not hear the kinds of stories that the member is talking about. There is no one in any part of this country who should feel scared in their home. There is no one who should feel that they are unsafe. Certainly it is our responsibility to make sure that happens.

We recently had a very good and effective session at the guns and gangs summit held in Ottawa where we heard from experts from across the country, with a very heavy preponderance of those coming from rural communities, to talk about some of the solutions that we need to bring to bear. One of the things that was evident from that was the imperative nature of understanding the needs at a local community level and funding those.

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In other words, when I was on council, or when I was on the Durham Regional Police Service's board, the needs in my district of Ajax or the broader Durham region, would not be the same as the member's for Lakeland. The community at a ground level understands what they need to curb crime and make a difference, and how they can build community capacity to create the kinds of safe environments that we mutually desire.

It is one of the reasons we put forward the money in the first year of \$32 million growing to \$100 million a year in order to build that community capacity and to deal with helping communities curb this type of problem.

I also want to point out that in first nation communities we recognize that they too have also been under-resourced. That is why we were pleased to sign new agreements with first nation police forces that saw an increase of \$291.2 million for first nations policing and that included \$144 million specifically for officer safety, police, equipment, and for salaries. Starting in 2019, we will see 110 new positions at a cost of \$44.8 million.

There are 450 first nation communities across the country and many of the issues we are talking about affect those first nation communities as well. When we are looking at what we can do to restore funding to the RCMP and build up their capacity, similarly we also have to take a look at our first nation communities.

I know the member did not specifically talk about gun-related crime, but I would also make mention of the fact that we are seeing a very disturbing trend in firearms-related victims. We have seen a one-third increase across the country and that is also reflected in rural communities. It is not just victims who are involved in gang-style shootings. We are also seeing it in domestic violence and tragically also in suicides.

The crime element as it pertains to guns is one that is very concerning to us because it bucks the overall trend line down that we see in crime. We see that increase being quite pronounced over the last five years. That is one of the reasons why we had Bill C-71 in front of the House today, not as a panacea but as part of a broader solution in how we can deal with this escalation of gun crime that we are seeing in the country.

While we often see gun crime as an urban phenomenon, we know that roughly three in 10 crimes that happen in relation to a firearm happen in a rural community. In both Saskatchewan and in the Atlantic provinces, firearms-related crimes are higher in rural communities than in urban settings. The firearms legislation is also an important step.

● (1840)

The work the RCMP conducts is mostly rural.

I will talk for a second about some of the initiatives that are happening at the local level with the RCMP to try to address this problem, and hopefully we can look at furthering some of them.

The crime reduction strategy implemented by the RCMP in Alberta, for example, helps police resources target the small percentage of people responsible for a great deal of the criminal activity in the province. That is one of the disturbing trends we often see. The crime we see, which impacts so many of the different stories

we are talking about, is committed by a very small number of individuals. By targeting those individuals and going after the ones who are responsible, we can have a much greater impact.

The Alberta RCMP and the Alberta Rural Crime Watch Association recently signed a memorandum of understanding to help citizens take an active role in crime prevention, through patrol programs and police liaisons. There are also four crime reduction teams in Alberta, led by the Alberta RCMP, spread out to focus on rural crime concerns, such as breaking and entering, and property theft. These teams have led to more than 200 arrests, new criminal charges, and recovered stolen property.

I think the key here is what happens when we work as partners with provinces, the federal government, and municipalities. I thank my hon. colleague from Toronto, who got up to speak about the importance of working with local municipalities. It is that intersection of the different levels of government working collaboratively to come at this problem that is going to be absolutely key to our success.

At the same time, we recognize that the number of RCMP officers is absolutely essential. We know that the RCMP cadet enrolment is up 175% over the last couple of years. We are increasingly reaching out to make sure that the RCMP is reflective of the communities it represents, so that when the RCMP is in a rural setting, ideally there are people who have come from that community, know its local circumstances and challenges, and are able to respond accordingly.

As another example of that intersection of different elements working collaboratively to build community capacity, I would point out that in Saskatchewan the province's community safety officer initiative helps address high-priority but low-risk policing needs, including traffic and liquor bylaw enforcement, freeing up the RCMP and municipal police forces to focus on higher needs and more serious crimes. There are other ways of looking at this in terms of resource allocation, to make sure that the RCMP can focus on some of these larger issues, some of the ones that are more severe and causing communities more of a challenge.

The broader message is that the member for Lakeland is 100% right that we have a problem that is utterly and totally unacceptable. We need to bring the full force of government to bear, and that includes not only the RCMP but looking at all the interrelated elements of government that could help solve this problem, to partner with provinces and municipalities, and to do so as much as possible in a bipartisan way.

While we may not completely agree on the solutions, while we may look at it and think that we should do this or that, we both fundamentally agree that it is unacceptable, that it has to be fixed, and that we need to do everything in our power to accomplish that.

On that basis, I am pleased to work with the member opposite on this motion and, in a broader context, on this issue generally.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is especially important to me because I still live in the rural area where I was born and raised.

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I sometimes have the impression that people do not really understand our reality. One-size-fits-all policies are often imposed without a proper understanding of our reality.

In my region of Abitibi West and, really, any time police are responding to calls at night, there are about two teams on patrol. This means that we count on four police officers to cover a territory larger than some countries. This presents specific challenges. For instance, a traffic accident involving two vehicles can block traffic, which would require our entire police force to mobilize for a car accident, so those officers would not be available to respond to other calls. This can cause some rather difficult situations, since crimes are sometimes committed and people are sometimes injured. In such situations, an ambulance might not be available to get that individual to hospital, because there are only so many ambulances at night. This is just part of rural life.

Indigenous police forces face even more challenges because they have smaller staffs. If an officer is sick, someone else will have to work overtime, and it is complicated to find replacements. These police officers also face significant social challenges.

When talking about rural crimes, we cannot ignore the underlying social problems. Looking at these social problems is part of the overall solution, and it is extremely complicated.

In talking about indigenous police forces, I cannot ignore the death of Thierry LeRoux. His death sent shockwaves through my region. Thierry LeRoux was a police officer who was working in Lac-Simon when he was killed as he was responding to a person in distress.

I spoke to his father after the events. This is a very strong man. He told me that, even if it would not bring back his son, it was important to do everything possible to make sure that this never happens again.

This is why a motion like the one my colleague moved will help us find concrete ways to make indigenous police forces more tactically and operationally effective. These officers must have the necessary tools to better respond and serve the public.

Yes, we need to invest money, but we also need to develop a strategy and consider our thought process. We need to be open so that we can understand what police forces need, and then we can look at how much that will cost.

The additional funding has obviously been appreciated, but we must determine whether needs are still being disregarded, and we must give these police forces the appropriate operational capabilities.

I spoke to the chief of police in Pikogan, in my riding. I have known him since I was a little girl; his sisters babysat me. Now, we talk about what is going on. It is hard for him to respond, since the situations are so unique. This reality is often difficult to explain. We must obviously take a closer look at the operational capabilities of these police forces.

There is another specifically rural problem that has to do with rehabilitation. In a large urban centre, a person can get out of jail and choose to never again see the people who led him or her down the wrong path. It is easier to avoid former associates. However, when you come from a village of 300 people, how can you avoid seeing

them or being around them? It is nearly impossible. The only choice is to leave town.

● (1845)

That is a unique problem because it is very difficult for people released from prison to avoid getting involved with the same people again. We need to make sure rehabilitation services available in prisons are effective so that people from rural areas who get out do not get drawn back in. We have to look at everything related to rehabilitation because persuading these people to avoid the bad influences that led them to crime in the first place is a major challenge.

The other big difference when it comes to crime in rural areas is the victims. Victims in rural areas are much more likely than those in big cities to encounter their aggressor again while doing things like grocery shopping. That is very hard for victims of violent crime. People who are unfortunate enough to be in that situation may experience chronic post-traumatic stress syndrome because they relive the events every day and cannot fully heal.

I should also point out that some women never come forward because they are afraid their aggressor will be released on their own recognizance and will remain in the community, which does not solve the problem. In many cases, it is easier to keep the incident quiet. That is a huge problem for victims who cannot move on with their lives because they are constantly reliving those experiences.

We are talking about violent crimes that take a tremendous toll on victims, but we should also consider the victims of minor crimes. How is a person supposed to react when they see the person who stole from them daily, but that person was not charged because of a lack of evidence and the police did not arrive on time? What are we supposed to do in that case? It is an extremely complicated matter. It is hard to know what that is like if you do not understand what rural life is like.

That is why I am proposing an amendment to Motion No. 167.

● (1850)

[English]

I move:

That the motion be amended by adding, after the words "emerging crime rates," the following:

"(v) measures to increase the tactical and operational effectiveness of Indigenous police forces, (vi) strategies and resources dedicated to the judicial and rehabilitation systems in rural areas, (vii) improved support for victims of rural crime,".

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

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[English]

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Lakeland if she consents to the amendment being moved.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her support, and I accept the amendment.

• (1855)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to an issue that is of fundamental importance to me, and also to my riding of Provencher. It is a predominantly rural riding, with a few larger urban centres and lots of smaller communities that would be considered rural. The issue we are talking about today is security as it relates to rural crime. I want to thank my colleague, the member for Lakeland, for bringing this very important issue to the attention of Parliament and requesting to undertake a study on rural crime.

In 2015, Canada's crime index rose for the first time in 12 years. The highest increase was in western Canada. In fact, Statistics Canada reports that crime is on the rise in many parts of rural Canada, led by a 10% bump in rural Alberta in 2015. My own province of Manitoba has also been affected, with an increase of 4.5%. For example, the border town of Emerson has been featured in national news as it is one of the major points where illegal migrants are crossing over from the United States. The CBSA and the RCMP in the area are already stretched very thin, and this extra workload has kept them busy processing migrants as opposed to policing in their communities.

As the member of Parliament for the area, it is my responsibility to represent the concerns many of the residents in this area have. I know these concerns are echoed by many of the other communities in my constituency. It is not only in my riding, but all over Manitoba, the Prairies, and Canada. The most fundamental role of a government is to provide security for its citizens.

I want to be clear from the start that I appreciate and respect the work of the RCMP, CBSA, and all our other security and police services. They execute their jobs with professionalism, diligence, and dedication. They work long hours, often in harsh and uncomfortable situations. Unlike most of us, the security services in Canada do not shut down for Christmas, will not shut down this coming weekend for Easter, nor do they get to cancel on snow or rain days. I want to thank them for their continued service. Their dedication and professionalism lets me sleep at night.

The purpose of Motion No. 167 is to commission a study on rural crime. As I see the matter, and particularly as the matter relates to people in my riding of Provencher, the issues of border control, and RCMP and CBSA staffing are of the utmost importance. Canada is a heavily urbanized country. Statistics Canada identified that, in 2011, 81% of Canadians live in an urban area. That means roughly four out of five Canadians live in a city. One out of five Canadians lives in a rural area that is sparsely populated. We are spread out over this wonderful, great, vast country of ours.

All that space is both a blessing and a hardship. It means rural Canadians have a lot of space and freedom, but it also means they are farther apart from each other than in urban centres. It means it takes longer to get from point A to point B. It takes longer to get the

kids to hockey, to buy groceries, and to commute to school. It also takes longer for emergency personnel, including police services, to respond to an emergency.

The distance means that crime is a significant fear. When it happens, rural Canadians are often on their own. Help may not arrive until long after the crime has been committed. The isolation and distance from police means violent crime is extremely dangerous, and it is something many rural Canadians fear. Even property crimes like car theft, siphoning gas, and stealing tools, off-road vehicles, machinery, and equipment become serious issues. The loss of a car can be a troublesome thing, especially in a situation where one needs to respond to a medical emergency and is now unable to do so.

Another aspect that is often overlooked as it relates to crime is the whole aspect of unreliable cellular service in rural areas, and this is a real problem. If a situation arose, it would be difficult to get help without a vehicle, but without cellular service the sense of isolation is felt more strongly. The crime itself may be the same, but the impact of the crime on an individual can be very different in a rural area where cellphone coverage is minimal.

• (1900)

That is why in rural communities, a physical and visible police presence is critical. Knowing that there is an officer out on patrol provides peace of mind to many rural Canadians. If something were to happen, Canadians know that the RCMP is there to help. One of the biggest strengths of rural communities is the ability of the community and the police to come together and work together. This is a trait that is common to all Canadians, but it is especially noticeable in rural Canada.

In 2016, according to Statistics Canada, 67,136 incidents of property crime were reported in Manitoba. In 2015, there were only 60,863 incidents of property crime. That is an increase of over 6,000 incidents of property crime in one year, an increase of over 10% between 2015 and 2016. To add to that perspective, from March 4 to March 11 of this past year, there were 54 service calls made in Oakbank, which is one of the communities in my riding. Of those 54 service calls, 16 were for property crimes. That is almost 30%.

Property protection is important to rural Canadians. Chris Sobchuk, of Allen Leigh Security & Communications, in Brandon, Manitoba, said to the CBC that the demand for farmyard security makes up 50% of business at their trade shows, whereas previously it was only 5% to 6%. Mr. Sobchuk told the CBC that some clients have suffered home invasions where they were locked in parts of their houses while intruders robbed them.

The rural municipalities simply want more protection and to know where the line is on protection.

Private Members' Business

One of the significant challenges of policing in rural areas is a lack of police resources. This, of course, is no fault of the men and women who serve in our police agencies, but it impacts them and their ability to do their jobs and to do them well. We need to acknowledge this reality and do what we can to alleviate the strain rural police services face.

The influx of illegal border crossings we witnessed in 2017 provides an excellent example of how government rhetoric and policies have a real impact on the people on the ground, whether we are talking about RCMP or CBSA officers or Canadians living in rural areas.

Our police services are often overworked. In the visits I have made to the detachments in my riding, and I have six major detachments and some smaller ones spread around the riding, the common theme has been understaffing, which is caused by vacancies from individuals on various leaves. Staffing has been a huge issue for the RCMP. In my area, they do a tremendous job, but they are tremendously overworked, and a study is very appropriate.

I want to move to a few examples of some of the rural crimes that have happened in my area. There is a poultry farm in my area that was having a problem with the theft of gasoline, tools, and equipment, so the owner decided to get a German shepherd to help with the situation. They even stole the dog, so that was not a deterrent. Farmers in my area, and the folks who live in rural Provencher, are frustrated about rural crime.

I have spoken to many contractors who have had their tools stolen from job sites or the tool trailers they take to work as subtrades on building projects or housing projects. Not only are they out the tools, they have to make insurance claims. Sometimes the trailer is gone, so that is another insurance claim. Often they are not adequately covered by insurance. This creates a real hardship for these contractors who have to replace the tools but now are also unable to work.

There have been many instances of gravel and aggregate companies, which often work in rural areas, that have had copper thefts. Thieves come in and strip the equipment bare of all the copper wire, which is used to transmit electricity from portable generators to the equipment. The crews come to work in the morning and find that the copper has been cut and removed. That costs thousands of dollars.

• (1905)

I know of one gravel company where, for one of its spreads, the cost was \$30,000 worth of copper stolen, and that was just the price of the copper and to get it reinstalled. The other impact is the loss of the use of that equipment, which runs at \$15,000 per day. That means there are also employees who do not have a job for several weeks while the equipment is being repaired.

Therefore, I want to again reiterate the tremendous need for Motion No. 167 to be passed. There is an urgent need for rural crime in Canada to be studied.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak about the motion from my colleague across the way.

What the member is trying to get across is very admirable. All Canadians should feel comfortable and safe in the communities in which they live.

In the past, particularly in the city when I would knock on doors, there was one door I was always interested in. When I knocked on the door, the elderly woman would ask me to wait a minute. I could hear some movement. She was literally moving a couch away from the door so she could talk to me. She talked about how her life pattern had changed when. At one time, she would sleep at night, as most people do, but she chose to sleep during the day because she felt safer. There was a fear factor.

Whether it is urban Canada or rural Canada, it should not matter. People should feel safe in the communities in which they live. However, there are certain challenges rural communities need to overcome and they are truly unique to them. We could talk about things like population density and the vastness of rural Canada today. We can compare the city of Winnipeg and its related issues. We can talk about the advantages of having a higher density, although at times there is a disadvantage to that. All sorts of factors need to be taken into consideration when we consider why certain things take place in our communities.

However, it does matter who we talk to, whether it is someone in rural Saskatchewan, or downtown Toronto, or any other municipality. There is the general belief that people should respect property, that violence should not be tolerated, and that government has a role to play.

I find it interesting that the member is recommending that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security study this and then report back. I have had the opportunity to sit on a number of standing committees, as have all members. Standing committees can do an outstanding job, especially if they are prepared to put Canadian interests first and foremost and study a particular issue. I am not now and have not been a member of this committee, but I would have thought this motion would have been a nice discussion point at the committee itself. Representatives of the committees could sit down and talk about what they should look at in future committee reports.

Therefore, I am bit surprised. Maybe the committee has had the issue, but I do not know. Maybe it actually has done a study on the issue, but I do not know. Having these types of questions answered would assist members on all sides of the House to determine how they might want to vote on this motion.

Let us not underestimate how important it is to do what we can as a legislative body to address this very serious issue that rural Canadians face today. There is very much a growing concern about the amount of violence or property crimes that take place in our rural communities. We need to concede that there are many different stakeholders, and some of them are fairly significant. However, I was encouraged by the sponsor of the motion accepting the NDP amendment.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1910)

The NDP amendment addressed a very important component. We talk about the importance of our RCMP and how important of a stakeholder group that is. We know that we have indigenous law enforcement out there as well. Equally, this is a group that needs to be engaged in the process. There are certain factors that need to be taken into consideration. As a stakeholder and as a partner, we need to ensure that we are reaching out as much as possible, recognizing the critical role they have to play.

Our provinces also play a very important role in this. In previous years, under Stephen Harper, when I was in the opposition, there were actually cutbacks to the RCMP. In the last couple of budgets, there have been some improvements to the RCMP budget. However, to get a better sense, in terms of the financing of our RCMP today, there is an argument to be made, and I would suggest that we need to have that debate. When we take into consideration all the different factors at play, that could very easily justify a study.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has done an outstanding consultation job in regard to a bill that we actually passed just an hour ago. It is now at the committee stage. I suspect we will be hearing many ideas and thoughts out of rural Canada when Bill C-71 goes to committee. It will afford both rural and urban members, and Canadians as a whole, either directly or indirectly through elected officials, the opportunity to express many of the problems that are there today.

The minister responsible did an outstanding job, in terms of reaching into the communities, both urban and rural, looking at indigenous-related concerns and non-indigenous concerns, and looking at ways to improve the way we deal with firearms in Canada, as well as some of the implications of bringing forward a progressive piece of legislation and how that would make our communities a safer place to be.

A few hours ago, when I was speaking to Bill C-71, I indicated that in my opinion the bill was all about public safety. That is one of the reasons I truly believe that when Bill C-71 goes to committee, we will be afforded the opportunity to have that dialogue, at least in part. It will not be anywhere near as detailed as my colleague and friend across the way is suggesting in the motion.

The motion is fairly substantive. This is just the first hour of debate and it could be a while before we get to the second hour of debate. Whatever takes place here, I would encourage my colleague across the way to have that discussion, at the very least informally if not formally, with some of the standing committee members, to see where they might fall on the issue, given the fact that we are going to be debating or having input on Bill C-71, and how one could ultimately complement the other and possibly assist us in making a decision here, inside this wonderful chamber.

I see my time has expired. As always, I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts.

•(1915)

[*Translation*]

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this evening to continue where I left off in November 2017, on my question about the call centre. I asked the minister about the CRA and its notoriously difficult call centre.

A scathing report by the Auditor General pointed out that 64% of all calls into the call centre ended with the agency merely hanging up on the taxpayer. Of the over one-third of the people who were able to get through to a person, 30% of them were then in turn given the wrong information. This was pointed out by the Auditor General, so it is well known. The minister did not dispute the findings of the Auditor General, although the agency was much less candid about the problems that were known to exist then.

The minister's answer to my question that afternoon was wholly unsatisfactory. It was just routine, blame the previous government for everything kind of stuff. Canadians are getting tired of that. The Liberals are in the third year of their mandate so they need to start taking ownership of their track record rather than simply blaming things on the previous government.

The government did make a promise. It promised to make the CRA more client-friendly. A system where people are unable to get through to somebody is not client-friendly. It is a serious problem. Part of the reason it is serious is that when a person calls into the agency, he or she is looking for help. The individual is looking for assistance with compliance.

A problem that may exist, or a question that is unanswered, has a snowball effect. If a taxpayer is given wrong information and then prepares a return or a response to communication with the agency with information that is not correct, then that taxpayer has a problem. That may lead to an appeal or a notice of objection and that bogs the system down even further.

What we are hearing from professional tax preparers across Canada is that the objection process is increasingly bogged down through sloppy audits, through assessments and reassessments that are not done correctly, so the problems continue.

If a person at the front end answering the telephone at a call centre can give a taxpayer accurate information on a timely basis that can lead to the taxpayer complying with the law in the first place, then there would be fewer files in the objection system. Therefore, folks who have to address objections can focus on a smaller number of files. There is a cumulative effect to these problems.

Adjournment Proceedings

I have spoken to professionals who prepare returns, tax filers, and some people who work in the call centre and in other parts of the CRA. My concern is that things are not getting better. The pressure on call centre employees appears to be merely around reducing time on the phone in order to get the queue down to a shorter number so they do not have to hang up on as many people. That is great. We do not want them hanging up on taxpayers. Answering the phone and giving quick, sloppy, incorrect or wrong information to end a call as quickly as possible is one way to reduce the queue, but it is not the way to help Canadians. That is not being client friendly.

This is an ongoing concern and I found the minister's response on November 22, 2017, to be wholly unsatisfactory.

● (1920)

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to address the House and respond to my colleague's question about the Auditor General's recommendations on the Canada Revenue Agency's call centres.

I can confirm our government's commitment to improve CRA's services to all Canadians. The Minister of National Revenue accepted all of the recommendations in the Auditor General's fall 2017 report concerning the performance of the agency's call centres.

With our first budget, we are investing over \$50 million in the agency's call centres. We have already started hiring more agents to answer more to Canadians. Budget 2018 offers much needed investments in the services that CRA offers to Canadians, including further funding for the call centres.

Let me be clear. With respect, we will not take any lessons from the Conservatives who chose to cut funding and training in the CRA's call centres year after year. As the volume of calls coming into the centres increased, Stephen Harper's Conservatives reduced the number of agents in the centres, reduced the hours of operation, and reduced the service standards in these centres.

As to what our government is doing, let me be clear. The CRA is taking action in three areas to improve services offered by all its call centres. Work is already under way to improve service delivery to call centres to improve accessibility to all Canadians, to strengthen the quality and accuracy of responses, and to enhance program measurements and reports.

The CRA is committed to being more transparent with Canadians to ensure that they know the level of service they can expect and how the agency is performing against those expectations.

The service standards my colleague has criticized on numerous occasions were used every year under the previous Conservative government, yet another one of the Conservatives' messes our government was left to clean up.

As Canadians know, improvements take time, especially the launch of a new technology platform. I can assure everyone that there are ongoing improvements. We have hired additional call centre agents and we have improved our existing systems and processes to enhance access to the call centres. We have put measures in place to reduce the chance of getting a busy signal. We

have also expanded the options available to callers through the interactive voice response system.

I have appreciated this opportunity to report on the progress.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's response tonight was full of promise and an acknowledgement of the shortcomings identified by the Auditor General. Unfortunately, it contained no evidence that there has been any improvement in service or any fulfillment of the Liberals' campaign promise to treat Canadian taxpayers as valued clients as opposed to merely taxpayers.

The Liberals are going to have to start demonstrating some evidence that anything they have done since they were elected in 2015 has actually contributed to keeping any of their election promises. They are well into their mandate. It is well past time to blame the previous government.

We could get into a race to the bottom about who has been the worst at serving Canadians in a department, but that is not going to help people figure out how to file their tax returns properly.

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that our government is committed to improving services to Canadians, and that is exactly what we are doing.

As the Auditor General recommended, the CRA is taking action in the three areas that were identified to address service standards offered by its call centres, by improving accessibility, by strengthening the quality and accuracy of the responses that Canadians receive, and by enhancing program measurements and reports.

While the CRA is confident that implementing the action plan to improve the services provided to Canadians through its call centres will improve the customer service experience, we acknowledge that achieving all these goals will take time. However, we are committed to making sure that every Canadian gets the best service possible.

● (1925)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last time I stood to discuss the continuing barriers to the success of the murdered and missing indigenous women's inquiry, I did not get an answer from the government about how the Liberals were going to respond to the interim report of the national inquiry.

Two and a half years into the mandate, it is a very strong commitment by the government, which is certainly shared by New Democrats. It is our highest priority. This is a request that was identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its calls to action. The momentum of over a decade had the families of murdered and missing indigenous women ask the federal government to take leadership and get to the bottom of why and how these women disappeared and what the gaps are in our justice system that failed to support them.

Adjournment Proceedings

On November 1, the inquiry provided its interim report. It identified that seven out of the 10 barriers to its success were direct bureaucratic stumbling blocks put in place by the federal government, and possible to be removed by the federal government.

When I had the opportunity in question period on November 22, I asked the government if it was doing everything it could to remove those barriers. We were assured that, yes, the government was removing those barriers, but there is still no evidence that has been done and still no response to any of the very strong recommendations from the national inquiry in its November 1 interim report.

Therefore, once again, I ask the government how it is removing the barriers to the inquiry's success. Also, how quickly are we going to see a response from the government to the November 1 interim recommendations and requests from the inquiry?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people to respond to the questions from my hon. colleague.

Our government is absolutely committed to ending the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We are the first government in this country to ever step forward and recognize the need for this inquiry.

We have appointed an independent group, and that commission has a mandate that is very clear that families must be at the centre of the work that it does. We are committed to getting family members the answers that they need and that they have been waiting for about the systemic and institutional failures that have led to the murder of far too many indigenous women in our country.

We are also taking immediate action with investments in women's shelters, housing programs, and education. We are reforming the child welfare system. We are ensuring safety on the Highway of Tears. We have been moving diligently, as a government, with our indigenous partners and communities across Canada, to ensure that proper investments are being made to help eradicate this situation.

The inquiry released its interim report on November 1, 2017. 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."

The government will be responding shortly to the recommendations of the inquiry's interim report and outline further actions at that time. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs has also met with commissioners on several occasions, including since the interim report was released.

On the broader recommendations, the commission is right to raise these important issues, because they are all connected. The government took immediate action on these points because they produce better results for communities, lead to stronger and healthier families, and support self-determination.

We know that the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls must be at the heart of this inquiry. To put an end to

this national tragedy once and for all, healing must be brought to the families and justice must be done for the victims.

We are all determined to do this right for the families who are impacted and many other families in this country. We are determined to honour the spirit and memory of the loved ones who have been lost. We will continue to do the work we have to do as a government to ensure that this happens.

• (1930)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I have heard that same speech for two and a half years. The member did not answer a single question that I asked.

Is the government going to establish a commemoration fund, as the inquiry asked for in its interim report on November 1? Is it going to provide additional funding to the Health Canada resolution support program? Is it going to establish a national police task force to reopen cold cases, as the families have asked again and again? Is it going to provide alternative administrative processes so the inquiry does not get caught up in all this Privy Council Office delay?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did that when Murray Sinclair insisted. This inquiry has not. We have to get specific. We are running out of time. I agree with all the member's sentiments. They are all good words, but there is no action in them.

I have asked some very specific questions, and I will keep asking them until I get an answer. We cannot keep saying "We will soon reply." The government has been saying that since November.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I can certainly understand the frustration of the member opposite, but she needs to understand as well that this inquiry is progressing, that families are at the centre of it. Many people today are before these inquires. Many people need the support of government, in so many ways, in getting through this process.

As a government, we are acting as we go along. We are not waiting for the full inquiry to be done to make the appropriate investments and commitments. We have been doing that all along. We have been investing in shelters. We have been investing in housing. We have been investing in the reform of the child welfare system. We have been creating awareness around this issue as has never been done before in the country.

We are working with our aboriginal policing programs and indigenous governments. We are at every single table that we need to be at to ensure the success of this inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. We will continue to do that.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to follow up on a question I asked on November 22 about a very important matter for most of your constituents, and mine, and I am sure the constituents of all members of the House: the Canada Revenue Agency' call centres. This is an important matter for most people because it is tax season, and we are filing our tax returns with the CRA, which expects to receive all of the necessary information on time. In return, we expect to receive prompt answers and sometimes a cheque from the CRA.

The verdict on the CRA call centres is clear: they do not make the grade. Surely, this Auditor General's report cannot be more scathing than last year's. Just to recap briefly, the Auditor General found that when callers phoned a CRA call centre to request information on their own files, more than half of the calls were blocked. Out of 53.5 million calls, 29 million were blocked. Nearly 30 million of the 53 million calls were simply blocked. The callers were not even put on hold to wait for the next available agent. The calls were just blocked. The phone would not even ring.

The Auditor General found that when callers did manage to reach an agent, they were given wrong information 30% of the time. This means people are calling a representative of the Government of Canada for advice on their own files and getting inaccurate information 30% of the time, causing them to be misled on their own files. One would hope that when a person calls the Government of Canada to request information, the agents answering the phone will at least, in most cases, provide accurate information, but that is not the case at the Canada Revenue Agency.

Imagine if these statistics applied to a private company. Imagine a cell phone provider or Internet provider with those sorts of statistics. That company would have gone out of business a long time ago. Customers would have simply given up on a company that provided such poor customer service.

However, when it comes to the Government of Canada, there is the impression that this sort of thing is normal and that it is okay. The government is complicated. It takes far too much money to provide quality service. That is what the government is telling us again today. Four months after this issue was raised, there are still no measures in place to resolve the situation. All we are hearing are things like "we know", "we are taking the Auditor General's report into consideration", "we are going to do something; do not worry", "we have a plan", "we will find a solution" and "we will provide better service". Today, four months after the report was issued, there is no indication that the situation has improved.

I am asking my colleague to tell Canadians, yes or no, whether they have more than a 50% chance of reaching an agent when they call the Canada Revenue Agency and, if they do manage to reach an agent, whether they have more than a 70% chance of getting accurate information.

● (1935)

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this

opportunity to correct the record in this House and to answer my hon. colleague's question.

I would like to note how ironic it is that the NDP is once again following the Conservative Party's lead. The NDP did the same thing during the 2015 election when it chose to follow Stephen Harper's Conservatives by choosing not to invest in Canadians and their communities in favour of balancing the budget. Perhaps my colleague does not realize that many of the issues he mentions stem from a decade of indifference and cuts under the previous Conservative government.

We know what choice Canadians made in 2015. Rather than choosing the NDP, they chose a party which has shown time and time again its commitment to invest in Canadians and the government services they receive. Our government continues to fulfill that mandate. Just last Thursday we voted for hours to ensure that we could maintain the funding for the important programs Canadians rely on every single day.

Let us talk about some specifics. For starters, in budget 2016, our government invested more than \$50 million over a four-year period, and in budget 2018, we invested an additional \$78 million over a five-year period to improve the CRA's call centre program. This is critically important. Thanks to these investments, we have already begun the work by hiring more agents and putting into place measures to allow more callers to access agent queues, resulting in fewer busy signals and reduced call attempts.

The agency has also launched a three-point action plan to modernize its call centres. The plan is focused on modernizing technology, training call centre agents, and updating its service standards to ensure that Canadians receive the quality service they deserve.

With the over \$200 million investment in budget 2018, we are making concrete improvements to the agency's services. These important investments will allow us to enhance the community volunteer income tax program, which helps Canadians complete their tax returns and access benefits such as the Canada child benefit; modernize our digital services to make life easier for Canadians who complete their tax returns online; and increase CRA's ability to automatically qualify Canadians for the benefits they deserve, such as the new Canada workers benefit.

It is extremely important for the agency to treat Canadians as important clients, not simply as taxpayers. We are working every single day to improve the services the CRA offers to Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, it is funny to hear my colleague still talking about the 2015 election in her speech and accusing me of presenting a bold, yet responsible platform. We had the courage to say that we would go after the tax revenues needed to create a platform that was both bold yet responsible. What is somewhat ironic is hearing an accusation about having presented a responsible fiscal framework. I find that quite ironic.

Getting back to today's subject, when the Canada Revenue Agency releases the results on how its call centres are performing, perhaps in the next CRA performance reports, I wonder if we will even be able to trust the figures reported in those documents. The Auditor General has said that the figures on CRA call centre performance are bear no relevance to reality and are misleading Canadians.

Has that at least been corrected?

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, our government has invested more than \$50 million, and will continue its investment through budget 2018 to improve the services Canadians receive from the CRA's call centre program. While we have made great strides, we recognize there is a lot of work still to do. I am committing to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues, but most importantly to Canadians, that we will continue this important work.

As we pass the midway mark of tax filing season 2018, I encourage my colleagues and all Canadians to file their taxes in order to access the credits and benefits to which they are entitled, such as the Canada child benefit.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:42 p.m.)

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