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Monday, May 7, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 7, 2018

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

RECORD SUSPENSION PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.) moved:

That the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security be instructed to undertake a study of the Record Suspension Program to: (a) examine the impact of a record suspension to help those with a criminal record reintegrate into society; (b) examine the impact of criminal record suspension fees and additional costs associated with the application process on low-income applicants; (c) identify appropriate changes to fees and service standards for record suspensions; (d) identify improvements to better support applicants for a criminal record suspension; and that the Committee present its final report and recommendations to the House within nine months of the adoption of this motion.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I start, my thoughts and prayers are with my riding, Saint John—Rothesay, and the devastating flood we are continuing to experience right now.

I believe we have all made mistakes in our lives, and I do believe in second chances, when they are deserved. I would like to believe we live in a society that can forgive when such forgiveness is shown to be merited. Sometimes, often early in life, mistakes can lead to a criminal record. When a mistake is properly addressed, it is best for everyone, both the offenders and the society they live in, to move on. As a society, we need to be able to provide deserving citizens with a second chance. Unfortunately, for many Canadians, especially those in low-income situations, the criminal justice system often fails to provide this second chance.

Let me give an example provided by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John. A single mother in Saint John, let us call her Susan, a young woman with an excellent work record, was offered five well-paying jobs over a six-month period. These offers were all rescinded when it was revealed that Susan had a summary offence on her record. She stole a pair of jeans in 1998, her one and only offence. Now Susan cannot find quality employment, and she cannot afford the cost of a criminal record suspension.

Intergenerational poverty is a chronic condition that affects far too many citizens in my riding. Since I was elected, I have made it my top priority to represent everyone, all citizens in my community,

including and especially the most vulnerable and under-represented, the ones who need a voice, in particular people in poverty.

To address this problem, I have advocated and will continue to advocate for programs and policy changes that would help lift people out of poverty. Through programs such as the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit, and the implementation of a national housing strategy, our government has made tremendous strides toward eradicating poverty in Saint John—Rothesay and across the country. However, we can still do much more.

Past offenders, who are vastly more likely to live in or come from poverty than those without criminal records, still face an often insurmountable socio-economic barrier to re-entry into the workforce and, thus, escaping poverty. A criminal record check is a prerequisite for most jobs. Indeed, in one study undertaken by the John Howard Society of Canada, 60% of respondents reported that a criminal record check was an essential prerequisite to employment at their place of work. Many past offenders, like Susan, cannot afford the \$631, the cost of filing an application, although it may not seem like a lot of money to many people.

Acting on calls to action by the John Howard Society of Saint John and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John, I have tabled private member's Motion No. 161, which instructs the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to undertake a review of the criminal record suspension program. This would determine how the program impacts low-income offenders at present and how it could be changed to better facilitate their reintegration into society.

Many past offenders have paid their debt to society. They are seeking to reintegrate into our communities. They are trying to give themselves and their families better futures. They ought to be able to apply for and obtain meaningful employment, regardless of their means. Past offenders who are unable to find work are much more likely to reoffend, interacting with the criminal justice system all over again. In this sense, ensuring that past offenders are enabled to apply for and obtain gainful employment is crucial. This is not only part of an effective strategy to eradicate poverty in our community; it is key to combatting crime and keeping our streets safe.

Private Members' Business

● (1110)

To grow our communities, create more well-paying jobs, and ensure that communities across Canada are a safe place to live for everyone, we, as a government, must do everything in our power to break down the barriers faced by those currently living in poverty.

In 2012, the previous government passed amendments to the Criminal Records Act that dramatically altered the application process for what were then called “pardons”. The term “pardon” was changed to “record suspension”. This change was clearly made in an effort to make the process more punitive.

Kim Pate, executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, explains the difference between pardon and record suspension: “Pardon indicates that someone has moved on from where they were, not just that we’re hanging it [the suspension] over your head like a big dagger about to drop down on you if we perceive you’ve done something wrong.”

Pardon was replaced by record suspension. The goal of record suspension, and the policies that came with it, was to be publicly tough on crime. This unexamined toughness legislation was rammed through roughshod by the previous government and imposed on an already troubled pardons system. This toughness has had unintended negative consequences on Canadian society: legally, socially, and economically.

Here is what the previous government did to the pardon process: The base fee was quadrupled to \$631, and wait times for pardon eligibility were increased from three to five years for a summary offence and from five to 10 years for an indictable offence.

The results of this unexamined policy initiative, this tough-on-crime pose of the previous government, were telling. In 2011, the Parole Board of Canada received 29,829 pardon applications. After the changes were made, in 2015, it received 12,743 requests for record suspension, down by 57%. That is 17,086 fewer requests. Did crime change over those five years? I do not think so. This unfortunate policy shift actively and demonstrably discouraged Canadians, particularly low-income Canadians, such as those from Saint John—Rothesay, from seeking a pardon.

The Parole Board says that pardons are designed to support rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. This dramatic drop in requests for record suspensions is a strong warning. Current government policy on pardons is moving in the opposite direction of rehabilitation and reintegration. Those 17,086 people, the 57% drop in applicants in 2015, are not reintegrated; they are not participating in the workforce.

Former offenders are often low-income Canadians, people who are statistically much more likely to turn to crime if they cannot get a job. Approximately 3.8 million Canadians have a criminal record, but very few eligible parties apply for a record suspension. Fewer than 11% of those convicted of crimes have been granted a pardon or a record suspension. We should not be putting roadblocks in the way of reintegration and rehabilitation.

As Dr. Mary Ann Campbell, director of the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies at the University of New Brunswick, explained, pardons have an important societal function. She said that research

on record suspensions indicates that individuals who are granted record suspensions typically have a very low rate, under 5%, of subsequent criminal behaviour, and that record suspensions are likely to open doors for past offenders and justice-involved persons. These doors “support their pro-social lifestyle transitions” and raise families out of poverty.

For many low-income Canadians, pursuing a record suspension is a step in the right direction. We need to look carefully at the roadblocks our current system is putting in the way of the rehabilitation and reintegration of these less fortunate citizens.

● (1115)

If passed, Motion No. 161 would instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to undertake a study on the record suspension system in Canada, in particular on how it affects low-income applicants. The committee would be instructed to study how the system could be improved to remove barriers to the reintegration of past offenders into society. The committee would report back to the House with its findings within nine months.

A life sentence of poverty for a summary offence is an extremely unreasonable punishment, yet this is what the record suspension system as it currently stands imposes upon far too many Canadians. The stories of young adults especially, who come into my riding office, are heartbreaking regarding the barriers that the system places on them. This is especially true for women, who most often bear the burden of child care and family support costs, and tend to apply for jobs in sectors that require criminal record checks more often than do men. The barriers to employment created by the record suspension program also disproportionately impact historically marginalized groups, such as indigenous Canadians, who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

The current system of record suspension takes a terrible toll on low-income Canadians, exacerbating the difficulties of some of our most vulnerable citizens. A recent poverty round table in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, part of the federal tackling poverty together project, identified criminal records as a significant barrier to employment and a contributing factor to long-term poverty. As Dr. Campbell explained, “Individuals who have a criminal record are often blocked from adequate and meaningful employment, as many employers require criminal record checks and are reluctant to hire people with a record. By maximizing a person’s opportunities for employment by suspending a criminal record for those eligible individuals, Canada is positively contributing to reductions in poverty.”

Private Members' Business

Judy Murphy of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saint John echoes these concerns, spelling out the implications of the current record suspension system on poverty, specifically on low-income women. She said, “Saint John has the highest rates of single-parent families living in poverty with a female head of the household in Canada. Over two-thirds of incarcerated women are single mothers to children under 18 years of age. On a regular basis, we hear of women being turned down for meaningful work at decent wages because of a criminal record. The current high cost of applying for a record suspension is beyond the reach of a single mother on social assistance. The long waiting period to be eligible for applying keeps a woman out of employment and the opportunity to maintain essential workplace skills. If a woman is in a position to submit an application, the review time by the Parole Board of Canada can take between six months and two years. Although this is Saint John’s story, we recognize that the barriers created by the current record suspension system are told over and over again across Canada.”

Ms. Murphy endorses this motion, adding the following: “We support the need to explore the effect of the high costs on applicants, and to create a service standard that allows a record suspension process that minimizes wait times and costs, and magnifies ease of application.”

Motion No. 161 would instruct the public safety committee to undertake this examination of the high costs on applicants, look at minimizing wait times, and examine the application process for a record suspension and its impact on low-income Canadians.

Bill Bastarache, executive director of the John Howard Society of New Brunswick, also supports Motion No. 161, giving it the following endorsement: “The John Howard Society of New Brunswick promotes effective, just, and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime. We greatly appreciate your commitment to identifying and addressing barriers to vulnerable populations, ensuring each citizen is provided with an opportunity to move forward.”

The current system needs to change these shortcomings. We need to give those who deserve it a real second chance. When a Canadian who has been involved with the criminal justice system is rehabilitated and reintegrated as a productive and thriving member of our society, everybody wins. We are better as a country for it, and certainly my riding of Saint John—Rothesay would be better for these changes.

• (1120)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a process question about this. Of course, not every member of Parliament, as a result of the draw, is going to be able to propose a private member’s bill. Rather than putting forward a bill, the member chose to propose a motion as an instruction to a committee. The member could have proposed that motion at committee, and given that Liberals have a majority on that committee, it would no doubt have passed. Then he could have used his time slot here to propose legislative changes around the issues that he won. Instead, we have a proposal that in general asks a committee to study an issue, when the member could have put forward the changes he wants legislatively. We could have debated those, and then those would have gone for study at committee anyway.

If the member is so concerned about these issues he is talking about, why has he not proposed a study to the committee and used his opportunity to propose legislative changes, rather than probably the most minimal and non-substantive measure, which is to say that he thinks the committee should be told to study this?

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, my riding of Saint John—Rothesay has the highest number of people living in poverty. Child poverty is a chronic issue in my riding. People come to my office, which is right in the middle of the part of the city that has 50% to 60% child poverty and families living in poverty, day in and day out, who are looking for a break and a way out of poverty. I heard that one young lady stole a bag of diapers and the record she has prohibits her from moving forward.

To answer the member’s question, we consulted with a lot of people. The Liberals feel that the best way forward is to propose Motion No. 161, debate it, study it, and have a good dialogue among all three parties. I am very comfortable moving this forward.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everything the member just said in terms of values and principles are things we can agree on, but the fact is that the Minister of Public Safety has undertaken a public consultation already on this very issue. He hired EKOS to do a study of it, as a result of which we saw that three-quarters of Canadians support proper reintegration after rehabilitation. That obviously requires some changes to the program, changes that the Conservatives proposed that increased the cost, for example, of accessing record suspensions that were once called pardons. It ensures public safety of the very people he’s talking about, because since 1970, 96% of offenders who have been properly rehabilitated and then accessed these pardons have been reintegrated and did not reoffend.

Clearly, there are a multitude of things that can be achieved by having a proper record suspension or pardon system in place. However, it begs the question: If the minister has already undertaken a consultation, instead of proposing a motion to have the committee study it, with the facts before us, we know that the changes by the previous government were wrong and that the Liberals committed to fixing it, so why does the member not just fix it?

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the NDP always has the solution to every problem, but to move beyond words takes process, study, and time.

Private Members' Business

I will again say that my riding of Saint John—Rothesay has the highest percentage of people living in poverty. The biggest thing I hear from family after family, person after person coming through my door, is the prohibitive cost of \$631. It may not seem like a lot to a lot of people, but it is a barrier for people living in poverty. We have looked at this and talked with government. We have support and feel very comfortable that this is the right way forward. We have support from the Elizabeth Fry Society and the John Howard Society that say this is the right way forward. We will go forward this way, and I am very confident that we will have a very positive result.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 161, a motion that calls for a study on the impacts of people in Canada with a criminal past who seek a record suspension.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I must say that this is not a pressing public safety or national security issue. It does not deal with the immediate concerns of gangs, guns, and violent crime, illegal border crossings, cybersecurity threats by foreign states, extremist attacks, or any kind of the myriad of crime concerns. However, while we debate the merits of the record suspension study, I have to say that my sympathies are generally not with those seeking a record suspension, but rather with the people who have been harmed by their crimes.

Record suspensions should not be something that anyone with a criminal past can get. Some crimes can and should remain forever on someone's record. The member for Saint John—Rothesay cites minor crimes committed years ago. However, it is the serious criminals and repeat offenders that are generally the concern, not one-time shoplifters. The fact is that one-time shoplifters are usually dealt with by means of alternative measures.

For the member's information, records do not prevent someone from obtaining employment. As an employer myself years back, I had many employees in my operation who had criminal records. It did not prevent them at all from working.

What we are talking about today are those with a record of a serious crime, like sexual assault, child abuse, trafficking, homicide, and other violent crimes. While I appreciate that some of those convicted of these types crimes have a difficult time, a burden they have brought upon themselves in most cases, having a record creates a deterrent. It is a reminder that these crimes are not welcome in society.

As a person of faith, I do believe in forgiveness. However, it is easy to forgive when we are not the victim. Forgiveness is easy when it requires no sacrifice. It is, and continues to be, the top priority of this House to protect Canadians, ahead of political gains and party standing. I believe that the language of this motion, which focuses on the hardships of convicted criminals, once again follows the trend of the current Liberal government to be soft on criminals. It should place the consideration of victims and honest, hard-working Canadians first.

Under the previous Conservative government, record suspensions were put more in line with our values as a society. We removed the term "pardon" to reflect that this was not an elimination of their past, but rather a recognition of the efforts made by those individuals to

change their criminal past and live an honest contributing life within our society.

The Conservatives also removed criminals like child predators and repeat offenders with three or more indictable offences from being eligible to receive a pardon. As the member mentioned in his speech, this issue is not about a teenager shoplifting but about record suspensions for serious criminals.

The Conservatives also made it a user-pay model, so that taxpayers did not have to cover the costs of record suspension reviews.

Finally, the number of years that people with serious criminal convictions, like violence and sexual crimes, had to demonstrate that they were rehabilitated before they could obtain a record suspension doubled. Summary conviction offences went from three years to five years. Indictable offences went from five years to 10 years. To me, this is common sense. Actions have consequences, and those who have acted in a manner that many in our society might find unforgivable have longer-lasting consequences.

As someone who has worked in law enforcement and experienced the dark side of our society and complete lack of value that some place on other humans and human life, it is hard to reconcile those experiences with the sympathies of my Liberal colleagues. Looking at how many Liberals in the government have viewed public safety to date, I cannot say that the country we are building is safer than that of our past. Rather than feeling sympathy for victims of crime and defending those who respect and honour our laws, the Liberals seem to place misguided sympathy with those who have committed the crimes.

In Bill C-75, for example, which is the new Liberal legislation to change the criminal justice system, the Minister of Justice is seeking to water down protections for clergy. Having recently withdrawn from its previous position after considerable backlash from Canadians, the government has again sought to lower or remove protections against clergy in Canada. At a time of heightened hate crimes and increased religious conflict, we are making it easier to carry out a crime against any religious group. The government is giving lighter sentences on assaults with weapons, terrorism, rioting, and corruption. I have not met a Canadian who has asked us to water down protections. That certainly was not the Liberal mandate that the government received from Canadians.

Private Members' Business

•(1125)

However, the Liberals are getting tougher on some, primarily on law-abiding gun owners. The new gun legislation, Bill C-71, creates more rules and red tape, and potentially criminalizes honest Canadians who have not broken the law or harmed anyone. It is a regulatory bill, not a public safety bill. It appears that the Liberals' policy is to lighten penalties on criminals, make life harder for those who follow the law, and ignore real threats to Canadians by reducing penalties for serious crimes. It is hard to reconcile how a government so obsessed with image and photo shoots could be so completely out of touch with the needs of Canadians.

Any changes to our country's criminal justice system must place victims first. Too often, victims pay the price while the system works for criminals. For those with a criminal history, it is not up to society to change for them. Actions have consequences, and we have a path laid out to rehabilitation through prison and parole systems. Criminals who have been released must take on their own rehabilitation to earn their place back into being a productive member of society. No one can earn that for them, and no one else can give it to them. As Thomas Paine once said, "That which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly." If we hand out record suspensions with ease, they are, by human nature, valued less.

I am particularly concerned of the potential risk that softer record suspension rules will have on vulnerable sectors in our society. We know that agencies all across this country ask law enforcement to perform tens of thousands of vulnerable sector checks each year on individuals seeking to work or volunteer with our society's most vulnerable, namely, our children, our disabled, and our seniors. If record suspensions become easier to obtain, if the types of crimes for which someone can have his or her record expunged are expanded, and if the time it takes to demonstrate that one's life is truly free from crime is reduced, the possibility exists for increased risk for the vulnerable to be victimized. That is unacceptable.

Therefore, I am left, when looking at this motion and the various other public safety measures the government has proposed, to ask, where is the plan? There does not appear to be a plan, and that is not appropriate for this House, which should place the protections of the innocent first.

With violent crimes affecting local communities, gang violence taking the lives of so many young Canadians, and a drug crisis that continues to tear families apart, this House has important things to consider, and I just cannot say this is a top priority. Some crimes have the ability to shake our collective feeling of security across our communities and our country. In 2014, this House was shaken by an armed assault. In 2017, in Edmonton, an ISIS-inspired terrorist attacked a police officer and tried to kill other people with a van. Just last month in Toronto, all of us witnessed the madness that killed 10 people. We were not able to save those who were killed or injured, but we certainly should not reward the perpetrators and punish the victims.

Canadians want a government that ensures criminals face the full extent of the law. The Hon. Margaret Thatcher was fond of saying, "Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits.

Watch your habits, for they become your character. And watch your character, for it becomes your destiny. What we think, we become."

This motion tells us where the belief and attention is for the Liberal government. It is not with victims. It is not with law-abiding Canadians. It is not with police or national security. It seems to be with criminals.

I would caution my colleagues in government that their actions speak loudly to Canadians. Canadians are on the side of victims, police, and safer streets and communities, and they are on the side of families. Being on the wrong side of that will determine each of our political destinies.

•(1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first let me say that we support the motion by the member for Saint John—Rothesay, though we do want to raise a few points. We are disappointed that the Liberal government is dragging its heels on this and would rather do more studies than take action on a file that has already been studied.

I will also address a few of the points raised by my Conservative colleague who just spoke. Today we are talking about record suspension. The first thing I want to point out is that, contrary to what the member just said, record suspension is not permanent. What it does is make it easier for an individual who committed a non-violent crime, such as drug possession or something like that, to reintegrate into society and get a job. Many employers use Canadian police databases to find out if an individual has a criminal record. It can be extremely difficult for anyone with a record to get a job and reintegrate into society.

•(1135)

[*English*]

The statistics speak for themselves. The fact is that since 1970, 96% of rehabilitated offenders successfully reintegrated into society and did not reoffend. When we are looking at achieving the public safety goals the previous Conservative government claimed to want to achieve, there is nothing more important than having a program of record suspensions, or pardons as they used to be called, that works properly. After all, offenders who do not reoffend is the ultimate achievement of our justice and corrections system, and will ensure public safety by not seeing the circle of perpetual crime taking place.

Private Members' Business

That is one thing. That is without even getting into the fact that, as the member who presented the motion correctly pointed out, all too often the types of crimes we are looking at with regard to this program are being committed by people who are in difficult and desperate situations and who need the kind of support this kind of program could offer. Then, when they have paid their dues, when they have done their time and have gotten out and have been successfully rehabilitated, they can become productive and welcome members of a community once again.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals acknowledged that some of the Conservatives' changes were in need of fixing. That includes the higher cost, which is a barrier to access. The Conservative member we just heard from said that the financial burden should fall squarely on the person who committed the crime. Because of that approach, just filing an application for a record suspension, also known as a pardon, went up from \$50 or \$100 to \$631. That does not include the cost of getting a pardon, which bears mentioning. A person who is rehabilitated, who wants to reintegrate into society, and who is looking for a job obviously does not have enough income to cover such a huge expense. That person can forget about it. Plus, the \$631 fee applies regardless of the outcome of the application, which can easily be rejected.

As all members know, whenever people have dealings with the federal government, whether in the area of public safety or any other, they might tick the wrong box or forget a comma somewhere, and they will be penalized as a result. That is the kind of situation we are talking about here, except that in this case such mistakes are very expensive.

This is something we need to address as a society. By reversing the changes made by the previous government, some of the cost could be absorbed by taxpayers. Once again, this could also help us achieve some important public safety objectives.

[*English*]

These are all things that the Liberals recognized in the last election, which during debates about public safety issues, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness committed to fixing, so much so that the minister has done exactly what the member wants to do, which is to have the public safety committee, which I am vice-chair of, study this very issue. However, the fact is the Minister of Public Safety has already undertaken this very study to see what Canadians think, to see what the different positions are, to understand that there is support in civil society from exactly the groups that were enumerated by the sponsor of the motion earlier in his speech and in response to questions and comments.

During the minister's study of this issue, an important fact came out. Three-quarters of Canadians support easier access to record suspension in the event that the person applying has paid his or her dues, both in the literal and philosophical sense, and has been properly rehabilitated. Canadians recognize that in order to ensure public safety, we need to achieve the rehabilitation goals that our system sets out to achieve. One of the most important ways to do that and to lead to reintegration is to allow easier access to the labour market, which requires this sort of record suspension.

It is important to note, contrary to some of the fearmongering we just heard by a member bringing up the attack on Parliament Hill in 2014 and other forms of violent crimes and terrorism, that this is not what is before us. What we have before us are non-violent crimes, things like drug possession, and shoplifting has been used as an example, that lead, and rightly so in many cases, others less so, to having a criminal record.

We could have a debate another time over the criminalization of drug possession and the decriminalization of that, and the fact that the government, while legalizing marijuana has sent mixed messages about pardoning those who have criminal records, in particular, those who obtained those criminal records during the debate in this very place about the legalization of marijuana for simple possession.

Putting that aside for a moment, we are not talking about people who have committed terrorist acts. We are talking about people who have committed minor offences, who have done their time, who have paid their dues, who have been properly rehabilitated, and who have waited a period of time that is prescribed by this program to then apply, and even through that application, without any guarantee that they will seek the record suspension.

Let us put that fearmongering aside and look at the very real public safety goals that could be achieved by making a record suspension easier to access. Contrary to what the member who just spoke said, yes, a criminal record is a deterrent, but the folks we are talking about here have already been deterred because they have been rehabilitated and gone through a long and arduous process that has led them to be able to apply.

Those are the facts before us. That being said, I recognize that the minister has studied this issue, a Liberal member is proposing this motion, and this is already something that the Liberals have committed to do. Therefore, I would wonder why, instead of having another study, instead of asking a committee that is tasked with some very heavy files, with legislation, with a calendar that is completely booked for the next several months at the very least, the government would not just act and bring forward the necessary legislative change to make sure that we are achieving the very real public safety goals that can be achieved by making it easier to access this program.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Why not simply do something?

Once again, the government wants to study this situation ad nauseam. Meanwhile, there are citizens who deserve to be pardoned, who have done their time, who have paid their fines, who are rehabilitated and can now reintegrate into our society and begin contributing to our communities. It is well known that they will not reoffend, since the statistics from the past 45 years prove it. A very low rate of recidivism is the ultimate goal of our public safety system.

I therefore congratulate the member and I support his motion. I have to wonder, though, what is actually being done and, even if the committee undertakes such a study, how much longer we have to wait for the Liberal government to fulfill a commitment.

Private Members' Business

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today and to lend my support to this study of the record suspension program brought forward by my colleague from Saint John—Rothesay. I thank him for doing so.

[English]

I was pleased to second this motion in the House today. As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I think it is important that we have someone who feels so strongly about this issue raising it and suggesting that this study come to the committee as a priority. That is how we set our agenda. It is by having members who see what is happening in their communities and how it is touching individuals in their communities bringing that forth so we can make sure that it is a priority for us to look at in our committee. I am very grateful for that.

If this is passed, we would be looking at undertaking a study on the record suspension program. We would examine the impact of a record suspension in helping those with a criminal record reintegrate into society. We would examine the impact of criminal record suspension fees and additional costs associated with the application process on low-income applicants. We would identify appropriate changes to fees and service standards for record suspensions, and we would identify improvements to better support applicants for a criminal record suspension.

This is fairly new wording we are talking about when we are talking about record suspensions. What are we actually talking about?

Formerly, this was known as a pardon. What record suspensions do is allow people who have been convicted of criminal offences and have completed their sentences and demonstrated that they are law-abiding citizens for a prescribed number of years to have their criminal records kept separate and apart from other criminal records. They essentially remove a person's criminal record from the Canadian Police Information Centre database, known as CPIC, for short. The reason this could be important is that it would help people access employment, it would help people access education, and it would help people reintegrate into society. That is important.

I am looking at a study by EKOS that came out of a government consultation on this issue. When the government consulted with the public, the findings showed that participants said that a record suspension was a tool to help offenders move forward in their lives, and in doing so, remain productive members of society, free of criminal behaviour. If that is the goal seen by the people who were responding to the consultation, then making sure that the record suspension program works has to be considered as far as allowing people to access housing, employment, education, and the like, so that they may reintegrate into society.

One of the reasons we are discussing this today, and why it is important, is that there were many changes brought by the former government in 2010 and 2012 that made significant changes to the way the record suspension program works. For example, the period of time people convicted of indictable offences had to wait to apply for a record suspension went from five to 10 years. It was doubled. That is one part. How long do people have to wait?

Another important part is part (b) of the motion, which states, "examine the impact of criminal record suspension fees and additional costs associated with the application process on low-income applicants". As has been mentioned by other members, the fee was quadrupled to \$631. This simply made getting a record suspension unattainable for many people.

● (1145)

I was looking at an article in *The Globe and Mail*, which brought to my attention an example that stood out as far as how record suspensions can work. One of the examples was a former Yukon premier who served from 2002 to 2011. He gave an interview on record suspensions. He said:

If you're burdened with mistakes of the past on an ongoing basis, that in itself can contribute significantly towards further problems as you go through life.... It becomes a real challenge for individuals. They're shunned. Certain doors aren't open to them.

This was a former premier of Yukon, who, in 1975, was convicted of offences, and he spoke about that. The article reads:

"In my case, I went from the penitentiary to the premier's office".... [He] rose to power as leader of the conservative Yukon Party. "And the reason I got there was because I was able to achieve that full pardon and have a clean slate in my life."

He is someone who has experienced quite dramatic change in opportunity and in what he was able to accomplish. As I mentioned, this is one of the reasons we need to be thinking about it.

I want to highlight an organization in my community that does some great work providing opportunities for people who have criminal convictions and are exiting the penitentiary system. It is called KLINK Coffee. It is a social enterprise that works through the John Howard Society. It provides employment opportunities specifically to individuals who are leaving the penitentiary system. It is a chance for people to develop jobs skills and get the experience they need. It also sells some quite lovely coffee. I know, because we have it in our office, and it makes a good cup of coffee. As a social enterprise, it is an amazing thing.

However, we know that this is not true for all employers. Not everyone is going to be comfortable hiring someone with a criminal record. How do we make sure that people have opportunities to reintegrate, and how do we make sure that we have a fair system going forward?

I see the study as a chance for us to look at where we go from here. We know that there were significant changes made under the previous government, and we have seen the impact. We heard some statistics mentioned by my colleague about the number of applications for record suspensions. They have been drastically reduced in the past years.

Through the public consultations I mentioned, we found that people overwhelmingly supported shorter waiting periods. People suggested that the periods we have right now are too long. Another part that was flagged for us, and I will note the John Howard Society, is that the process is complicated. In fact, it creates a disincentive. It is too complicated for some people to ever be able to complete the process. This is something else we considered, specifically in part (d) of this motion, as something we should consider.

Private Members' Business

What I am looking forward to in a study is a chance to look at all these issues, to get better information, and to build on what was found in the public consultations. We could then make recommendations on how we can make a stronger system going forward.

It is a wonderful opportunity to give people a second chance, and I am very happy to be supporting this motion today.

• (1150)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by wishing my wife a happy anniversary and thank her for seven great years. All of us in the House who are married can really appreciate the significant sacrifices our spouses make to make it possible for us to be here and do this important work. In many ways, they make greater sacrifices than we do.

I want to thank the member for Saint John—Rothesay for putting this motion forward. I had the pleasure of being in his riding last week talking to people there. I do not know if he will appreciate the fact that I visited his riding, but it is certainly a beautiful riding. I had a chance to talk to a number of not-for-profit organizations that are involved in important work on some of the issues he spoke about in his speech, including poverty alleviation.

I want to say, somewhat parenthetically, and it is very important, that much of the work being done in Saint John—Rothesay, in New Brunswick, and throughout the country around rehabilitation and poverty alleviation is done by independent civil society not-for-profit organizations. The most important work is often not done by government. It is done by these external organizations.

There is a big impact in New Brunswick because of the Canada summer jobs policy change made by the government. I met with groups who were specifically involved in the issues the member spoke about, issues around poverty, for example. They are concerned about the fact that as charitable organizations, they have a much harder time accessing those resources. A lot of those dollars are now going to for-profit companies instead of to not-for-profit organizations that might have a statement of faith or a conviction that excludes them from participating.

I know that the member's passion for these issues is genuine. I encourage him to look at what he can do and what the government can do to remove barriers to civil society organizations that are doing that work.

During a previous trip, when I was in Moncton, I was inspired to meet with people involved in Harvest House Atlantic. This is a great organization that works on rehabilitation and reintegration as well as with people who are struggling with substance abuse. This organization was founded by someone who had a previous involvement with crime. It is an organization that is no longer able to access the Canada summer jobs program as a result of the changes that have been made.

I want to make a point specifically about the process that has brought us to this discussion. The member has brought us a motion calling for the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to undertake a study. This proposal has convened debate in the House of Commons about some important issues.

My suggestion would be that if he wanted to confront the issues he is talking about, he could have, at any point, put a motion before the committee to undertake that study. His party has a majority on that committee. It sounds like his party is going to support this motion, which means that the motion will pass and the committee will undertake the study.

The member had the opportunity to put this motion forward earlier in this Parliament, and perhaps the study would have brought forward proposals for legislative changes. He could have used this opportunity to propose substantive legislative changes. If he proposed legislative changes, even in a more speculative way, that legislation, were it to pass, would still go to committee for study. There would be the same opportunity for study, but it would be a study of specific legislative proposals on the system we have in place for record suspension.

I often wonder why the government members put forward motions for study instead of actual legislative initiatives. Because of the draw, not every MP in the House will have an opportunity to bring forward substantive legislation. When members have that channel, and there are issues they are hearing about from their constituents, and they have firm convictions, rather than saying we should study it more, there is value in actually putting legislative proposals forward so we can debate the merit of those legislative proposals.

As it is, when a motion comes to the House of Commons calling on us to instruct a committee to do a study on something, we are in a difficult position. Not knowing what is currently on the committee's agenda, not knowing what studies have already been suggested and what studies are already in progress, we are asked, as members of Parliament, to rule on the agenda of a committee. I would argue that perhaps, generally speaking, it would be more appropriate for the committee itself to rule on its own agenda and for the committee itself to weigh whether record suspensions versus other issues that may currently be before the committee is the one that should be studied. Again, the motion could be put forward at committee without needing to use up a slot in terms of a private member's motion or bill draw.

As such, when people who are not part of a committee are asked to rule on something, it is a bit of a strange inversion of what should be the process for managing the business of committees, which are traditionally thought of as masters of their own domain.

• (1155)

It raises the question of why the member is putting forward something that is not meant to bring about specific changes and that he could have done another way in a forum where there could be a wider airing of discussion to have the motion. The motion could have happened and gone forward much more quickly.

That said, I want to make a few substantive comments on the content of the motion on the record suspension issue, and I suspect I will continue during the second hour of debate.

This motion proposes a study on the process of record suspension. There is no harm in principle with doing a study, but we are concerned about the direction the government may want to go in trying to use this study as a basis for subsequent changes that we may disagree with.

Government Orders

A previous bill proposed by a Conservative government, the Safe Streets and Communities Act, made certain changes with respect to record suspension. The goal of those changes was to institute a system of greater balance. Certainly we recognize the important role that record suspension plays in allowing people to move on from that phase of their life if there is clear indication of rehabilitation, but safeguards need to be in place to ensure an appropriate balance by facilitating the protection of society and facilitating rehabilitation.

Let us be clear about what rehabilitation is all about. It is not about giving the benefits of rehabilitation before a person has clearly established that they have gone through the process of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is the process by which an individual takes responsibility for their life and chooses to pursue a different path than they have pursued in the past. In that sense, rehabilitation is associated with asking people to be responsible, to take responsibility for their actions. That is something that must be well and closely connected with what is happening in that case.

In pursuit of a greater balance with respect to the issue of record suspension, the previous Conservative government made a number of changes, such as disqualifying anyone with more than three convictions for indictable offences from ever being able to apply. Most Canadians would think that is reasonable. If someone has gone through a process and was thought to have been rehabilitated, yet has reoffended and has multiple cases of reoffending, then I would argue it is reasonable that the offence remain on their record.

There is a difference between removing a record for a one-time offence, maybe something a person did a long time ago, and removing the record of someone who has repeatedly been involved in a pattern of criminal activity. That is not to say that the person cannot be rehabilitated and it is not saying that person should not be able to access employment, but if there is a case of a repeat offence, the information should be out there, because if that person has shown a pattern in the past and maybe seemed to be rehabilitated, then we should be much more careful when it comes to how we manage that person's record.

That was a change that was made as part of Bill C-10. I think it brought greater balance and that it was reasonable. I think many Canadians would support this idea and would recognize the need for record suspension in certain cases as well as the need for balance to protect public safety.

Another change the previous Conservative government made was to forever disqualify convicted child sex offenders from being able to apply. Again, when someone is involved in a serious offence that puts a child at risk, it is reasonable for that record to be available in an ongoing way so that, for instance, an employer who might choose to hire someone who had a past event but who gave every indication of rehabilitation would still be extra careful about having that person around vulnerable people.

Having that record out there is reasonable when we are talking about child sexual offences. We do not know whether the member for Saint John—Rothesay agrees with those changes or not. He was quite critical of changes that we made and he has a motion for an open-ended study. The implication is that there was something wrong with what was done under Bill C-10. Again, the cases I have identified are relatively reasonable.

● (1200)

The change in terminology from “pardon” to “record suspension” is very reasonable, because it preserves the sense that there is still a record of that offence; it is just a question of whether or not that record is public.

I clearly have some concerns about the motion. I do not think the member is necessarily going about it in the most effective way. We should be very careful about the direction the member is asking us to go.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-65, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

● (1205)

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (for the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (for the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Government Orders

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be up on a Monday morning, starting the parliamentary week off with a bill that has received so much support and agreement from a number of members from all parties in the House. As we wind down the parliamentary calendar, getting this level of agreement on a piece of legislation is rare, so I am going to enjoy that for the next 20 minutes.

Off the top, I want to recognize the government members on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities and the contribution they have made to this particular piece of legislation. Their efforts are always appreciated and welcomed, and they are very productive. The members for Toronto—Danforth and Oakville North—Burlington went above and beyond. Aside from their own committee duties, they pitched in on the HUMA committee and made huge contributions. There were a number of other members as well, but these members were there for pretty much all of the meetings. I want to recognize that.

I am pleased to participate in third reading of Bill C-65. As I said before, all parties think Bill C-65 is critical at this point in time in our country. No one can argue against the fact that harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, have no place in the workplace or, for that matter, anywhere at all. We have all heard stories that demonstrate just how detrimental and pervasive these behaviours really are. These stories have dominated the media for some time now, and many more were heard during the meetings of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on Bill C-65.

There is a sort of strange story, a little weird, but it really stuck with me. It was testimony given by Dr. Sandy Hershcovis, associate professor at the University of Calgary. Dr. Hershcovis cited a recent *Science* magazine article describing “women on a geological expedition to Antarctica...reported that they were pelted with rocks by male colleagues, called names, had volcanic ash blown in their eyes, and were told that women should not be field geologists.” It is strange, but that one stuck with me. Many members also heard from former Parliament Hill staffer Beisan Zubi, who described the outrageously inappropriate behaviour she witnessed and in some cases was subject to herself right here on Parliament Hill. The testimony was very compelling.

What these and other stories demonstrate is that we live in a culture that tolerates workplace harassment and violence, accepts power imbalances and gender norms, and creates and reinforces inappropriate behaviours. For too long, these behaviours have been widely accepted in our society. These experiences are still too common and continue to take place in all types of workplaces. Many Canadians are still suffering because they feel they cannot speak out on this issue. They are staying silent because they feel their complaints will not be treated seriously or swept under the rug, or perhaps they fear repercussions from their employers—maybe even the loss of their jobs.

Many are in that position right now, and it is unacceptable. According to a recent Angus Reid study, 52% of Canadian women

experienced workplace sexual harassment, 28% were subject to non-consensual sexual touching, and 89% took steps to avoid unwanted sexual advances. These all-too-common occurrences have had devastating and far-reaching effects.

For victims, the effects may include, among other things, an increase in stress and anxiety and a reduction in engagement and job satisfaction.

● (1210)

For employers, the negative effects of workplace harassment and violence can include a reduction in productivity, increased absenteeism and sick leave costs, higher turnover and legal costs, and in some cases, unwanted publicity. The bottom line is that these behaviours are bad for employees and employers, and at the end of the day, they are bad for the Canadian economy.

Our government has carried the messages of inclusiveness and fairness since we were first elected. We are committed to the fact that everyone deserves respect and dignity. All of our actions, including our policies and legislative initiatives, have those principles as a backdrop. We have made it clear from the outset that we will stand up for the rights of all Canadians, including women, people of colour, those with disabilities, and the LGBTQ2 community, as these are often the people with the least power and who are the most vulnerable in our society.

Our Prime Minister has been at the forefront of this issue, with strong and definite positions on fairness and the principle of opportunity for all, as well as on his determination to take strong action on harassment and violence. This is at the core of our values and principles in Canada. After all, we are people of diversity, but that diversity has not always been matched with compassion and consideration for others in the workplace or, for that matter, in our society. Now is the time to effect real and lasting cultural change. We are resolute in creating a social climate where people can live in an environment free of harassment and violence, and where unacceptable behaviour is denounced and condemned.

This is the backdrop to Bill C-65.

I would like to point out that our actions started well before the #MeToo movement. In 2016 and early 2017, we consulted with employers, employees, various stakeholder groups, experts, academics, and Canadians from across the country. We previously had some data on the issue. However, it was clear we needed deeper insight, not only on the extent of the problem but also on current reporting and actions taken following workplace incidents. Canadians told us that incidents were largely under-reported, and that when incidents were reported, the follow-up action was inadequate and ineffective.

Here are a few statistics I would like to share: 60% of those who responded to the online survey said that they personally had experienced harassment at their place of work, 30% said that they had experienced sexual harassment in their place of work, 21% reported that they had experienced violence in their place of work; and 3% of those who responded said that they had experienced sexual violence in their workplace. We can all agree in the House that this is unacceptable. We can, and we must, do better.

Government Orders

We consulted with members of Parliament and senators. They were unanimous in the belief that strong action on harassment and sexual violence should be taken and that victims should be heard and helped. That is exactly what we are aiming to achieve with this historic bill, Bill C-65. Using the most effective legislative and policy levers to address the problem, Bill C-65 would put an end to workplace harassment and violence and its consequences in federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces.

Bill C-65 would do this by requiring employers to do three things: first, prevent incidents of harassment and violence from occurring; second, respond effectively to these incidents; and third, support the victims and affected employees.

Let me take this opportunity to thank each member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. After careful consideration of the many points raised by witnesses, members of the committee put forward important amendments to the bill, and amendments from all parties in the House were accepted.

● (1215)

The committee accepted the following an amendment to add clear definition of harassment and violence in the Canada Labour Code:

...any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.

Amendments also include specific reference to preventing occurrences of harassment and violence in the purpose clause of part II of the code. When it comes to training, employers would be obligated to provide it and take it.

Amendments also include more support for former employees in coming forward with complaints related to occurrences of harassment and violence, as well as provisions allowing employees to complain to someone other than their supervisor. That came out loud and clear during testimony and discussions with committee members.

The committee also sought and agreed to amendments that would ensure the harassment and violence provisions introduced in Bill C-65 would be reviewed every five years after coming into force to ensure these provisions would be current and would continue to meet the needs of workers.

To ensure the government is kept accountable and to track our progress and trends, the committee called for an annual report on harassment and violence in all federally regulated workplaces.

The committee unanimously agreed to make amendments that would give the deputy minister powers normally given to the minister to avoid the possibility of any conflict of interest when political actors were involved. This amendment in particular is a clear indicator of the collaborative efforts that went on during discussions and went into the bill before us today.

Thanks to these and other amendments, what we have before us today is a bill that we can all stand and be proud of, a historic piece of legislation that is long overdue. Our government is committed to taking action against workplace harassment and violence.

In addition to what we are doing in Canada with Bill C-65, we are also taking action against workplace harassment and violence on the international stage. We will be actively participating in the upcoming International Labour Organization, the ILO, negotiations at the international labour conference in Geneva later this month to develop new international labour standards. We will be there with our friends from the CLC, who will be making presentations at this conference as well.

These standards will help protect individuals from harassment and violence in the workplace. Canada's presidency of the 2018 G7 is an important opportunity for Canada to show global leadership and to engage our G7 counterparts on pressing global challenges, including the development and promotion of policies that prevent workplace violence and harassment.

Make no mistake, awareness is growing. We have come so far over the last year. The very fact that we are talking about it now demonstrates just how far we have come, and it is not just in Parliament.

This year's theme of the National Day of Mourning, which took place on April 28, was "Violence and Harassment - it's not part of the job". The National Day of Mourning is not only an opportunity for us to remember and honour all workers, men and women, who have lost their lives, been injured or fallen ill, but also an opportunity for us to renew our commitment to improving workplace health and safety to help prevent future tragedies.

More and more, people are recognizing the seriousness of the impacts of workplace harassment and violence. Many individuals are speaking out against these unacceptable behaviours and many employers are taking action as a result of the stories that are being told, but we still have a long way to go. Employers still need to do more. They need to take strong action to ensure that workplace culture does not tolerate this behaviour, respond quickly when the incidents do occur, and support the individuals affected. They must also take measures to ensure it does not happen again.

● (1220)

Our government is taking action for federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces, but we know the governments cannot effect change alone. We know that legislation is not enough. We have said, and my minister has been incredibly strong on this aspect, that what we need right now is a cultural shift to stop these unacceptable behaviours in the workplace. It will take us all working together to make that happen.

Government Orders

Changing the culture will require everyone to do their part. That means zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour anywhere and everywhere. It means all Canadians should feel safe and empowered to speak up when they see or experience something. We know that in federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces, the measures in Bill C-65 will help make these things possible, and we hope the bill will serve as an example of what it means to foster workplaces free of harassment and violence.

What is good for Canadian workers is good for Canadian business. We know that measures to prevent and effectively deal with harassment and violence directly result in increased productivity and retention of talent. It is about creating the kinds of workplaces in which the best and the brightest can thrive. Addressing harassment and violence is a big part of that.

For these reasons, we are calling for the continued support of Bill C-65 in the House. Simply put, support for the bill is the right thing to do for Canadian workers, Canadian businesses, and Canada as a whole.

With the passage of Bill C-65, we expect to see more people come forward and speak out against harassment and violence. There is no doubt there will be some uncomfortable discussions as we re-examine our behaviours and create new policies and tools to support more inclusive, safer workplaces free from harassment and violence. In the long term, we expect to see better outcomes for all employers and Canadians alike, real change and real progress in our society. Our hope is that the law will set the example and the standard for fairness and harmony in all workplaces in Canada.

Workplace harassment and violence is an issue that crosses all party lines, and we have certainly demonstrated that with Bill C-65. We are on the right path. Harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, must stop in our country, and we need to prevent it from happening in the first place.

I am confident that what we have heard to date on harassment and violence in the workplace will encourage the members of the House to continue to support this important initiative.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, for his speech on Bill C-65, which we have started debating at third reading today.

My question has to do with the substance of the bill. All of the witnesses we heard in committee agreed that there needs to be a definition of workplace harassment and violence. Our NDP colleague proposed an amendment that would have created a broad definition, with a clear distinction between harassment and violence. Unfortunately, this amendment did not receive support, even though it would have given this bill some teeth.

Since the government did not tell us why in committee, I would like to know why the government created one definition that includes harassment and violence, even though these are two different concepts. Are they not concerned that this will create confusion in relation to other sections of the Canada Labour Code?

Should the Senate not clearly review the definition of harassment and violence and separate the two?

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank my colleague, who has been in the House for quite some time, for his contribution to this study and to the legislation we are debating here today.

As I said in my comments, we did arrive at a definition. As is often the case in committee, there is testimony that goes through the whole spectrum. Some witnesses felt there should not be a definition at all, but if there were, then the broader the better, and others put forward some suggestions as to what should be included in the definition.

If I could read it into the record again, the definition that was arrived at was:

any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.

We wanted to make sure that the definition was broad enough. If we are too specific within the legislation, the government would be handcuffed and may have to go back to change the legislation.

When we look at this particular issue, who would have thought five years ago that cyber-bullying in the Twittersphere would become an egregious platform for attacking and harassing individuals? Things change over the course of time.

We wanted to keep the definition broad enough to provide the continuum for unacceptable behaviours. Within the definition, we included that continuum as to what is deemed unacceptable.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP will support the spirit and principle of Bill C-65, a bill that every party had a hand in. It was an onerous task that required a lot of extra hours in committee. We could have spent those hours in our ridings, but we spent them here in Ottawa working on Bill C-65.

There is something that I would like to address. I am not sure whether it is a misunderstanding or a matter of stubbornness, but in the bill the Liberals completely excluded the joint workplace health and safety committees from the complaint and investigative processes. Several witnesses, including representatives from unions and law firms, told us that it was important to maintain the joint workplace safety committees. They even offered a logical solution. They argued that confidentiality would be breached upon the filing of a complaint of abuse, harassment, or sexual harassment or during an investigation. They also floated the idea of creating a code of ethics in order to truly ensure victims' confidentiality.

I would like to know why the government insisted on completely eliminating from the Canada Labour Code the interaction with the joint workplace health and safety committees, thereby shutting them out of the complaint and investigative processes.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Jonquière, not just for the question but also for her hard work. As she indicated in her comments, there were additional hours and meetings held. I also want to thank the NDP for moving the motion that this piece of legislation move along with the support of the opposition parties.

With regard to the workplace committees, as testimony was being presented, we heard pros and cons on both sides of the issue. We believe that the workplace committees can play a very important and productive role when we are looking at developing prevention policy, the mandatory elements of the prevention policy, and identifying the competent persons. There was quite a bit of discussion around competent persons, and we believe that the workplace committees have a very important role within that. As well, with regard to assisting and implementing the competent persons recommendations, again, we certainly felt that was an important role, as well as in the reporting of incidents.

We want to make sure that persons feel comfortable and confident that when their concern is brought forward, it will be dealt with expeditiously, that it is going to be dealt with with a great deal of dignity, but as well confidentially. If there were any concern around that, we wanted to make sure that was put at ease by making sure the competent person would deal with that. Then that report will go back to the workplace committee. We thought that was the best way forward.

• (1230)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the parliamentary secretary for his excellent speech and for all of the work he has done to bring this bill forward.

We all know of this issue of people feeling hesitant to report the number of incidents that take place in the workplace with respect to harassment or sexual harassment. That is unfortunate. I commend the government for bringing forward this legislation, because the government is taking a proactive measure that is going to help create a safe space within which people can report.

I wonder if he could expand on the impact of Bill C-65 with respect to raising awareness and encouraging people who are experiencing harassment to come forth and report that harassment.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, for her work on this particular issue. As parliamentarians, we want to make sure that we get this right. I know she has been charged with the task of pulling together an approach on behalf of our party, and she has invested a great deal of time and energy on making sure that we get that right.

It is essential to the legislation, the bill, and the issue, that people feel confident in coming forward. The one thing we heard consistently throughout the testimony was that there are a great number of incidents that are never reported to supervisors. Sometimes the supervisor is the perpetrator of the harassment. There has to be that vehicle and that opportunity to bring it forward, and that is inherent. The amendments we made in the legislation underline the fact that there is a great deal of confidentiality brought into this.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by stating that the official opposition intends to support the bill before us today at third reading stage, even though it is not perfect, to say the least. I will have an opportunity to say more about that in a few minutes.

We support the bill because harassment has no place in our workplaces and we welcome any initiative or measure that eliminates harassment and violence from our workplaces.

Members will recall that the government introduced this bill only six months ago, on November 7, 2017. That may seem a long time ago for those listening at home, but it is rather quick for a legislative process. It proves that the opposition parties and the government have shown good will in advancing a bill that tackles a societal problem. We need only think, unfortunately, of all the scandals that have come to light in recent months and years. I agree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour that it is important to change the mentality of tolerance for these types of totally unacceptable behaviours, gestures, and actions in our workplaces.

The bill before us today, namely an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, harassment and violence, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1, covers approximately 8% of the workers actively employed in Canada. Who does it cover? It covers federal public service employees and federally regulated employees. The other part of the bill, the part that the opposition welcomes, applies to political staffers who are currently in a grey area, a legal limbo that leaves victims of harassment even more vulnerable. The bill covers federal employees and employees in federally regulated workplaces, but it also more broadly covers Parliament Hill staffers. That is a good thing, and it is one of the reasons why we support the bill.

I will start by listing three good points about the bill that convinced us to support it and for which the government has agreed to make amendments. We would have liked to see the government go much further, because our goal as the official opposition was to make this bill put the victim first. Unfortunately, in this case, as in many other cases, the current government was not willing to go as far as we would have liked.

We are confused because there is only a single definition for the words “harassment” and “violence”, which is completely illogical. The opposition fought to ensure that the bill contains at least one definition. The unfortunate thing about this government is that the Liberals sometimes tend to not want to put a name on things, and that can create confusion. At least there is a definition now. It is not perfect, but there is a definition of harassment and violence. A colleague read that definition just a few moments ago, but I am going to read it again because it is important.

[H]arassment and violence means any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment;

Government Orders

Were it not for the opposition's hard work, there would be no definition in this bill, even though that is very important because the definition serves as a framework for developing the regulations and enforcing the act. It was the opposition that proposed an amendment regarding the definition.

•(1235)

Another amendment I will call the *pièce de résistance* was also made. In that regard, I would like to recognize the remarkable work of my committee colleagues. I want to recognize the work of my colleague from British Columbia, the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove, who also worked overtime to help move this bill quickly through the House. The young member for Battlefords—Lloydminster also did an outstanding job. We had the support of other members, particularly my colleague from Lethbridge, who proposed an amendment that made us feel a lot better about supporting this bill. The amendment I am talking about is what I would call the firewall amendment. In our democratic system, it is crucial to maintain the independence of the various branches of government. There is the executive branch, represented by the government, and the legislative branch, represented by Parliament, or the House of Commons and the Senate.

One of our main concerns about the original version of the bill was that it opened the door to government interference in the affairs of parliamentarians. It undermined the independence of parliamentarians, which is completely unacceptable. That said, we must ensure full compliance with the law when such despicable events happen in the parliamentary environment. My colleague from Lethbridge proposed a very sensible amendment that would ensure that all complaints regarding harassment or any other offence under the labour code would land on the desk of the deputy minister. This amendment was designed to prevent political interference.

We often used the same example in committee; it concerns all governments, not just the current one. If a political staffer, either male or female, says they have been the victim of harassment on the part of a minister, we must ensure that their complaint is dealt with independently, without political interference. That is what the amendment does. I would even say that it was so well worded that it also prevents people from using occupational health and safety issues to interfere in parliamentary offices. Thus, the objective has been met thanks to the amendment brought forward by my colleague from Lethbridge, and I thank the government for accepting it. It will prevent all insidious political interference in the process. That is a good thing. Thus, we now have a definition and a firewall of sorts.

Other measures were introduced through amendments that we proposed to ensure that the government focuses on supporting and helping the victims, as it promised it would. The government talks a good game, but we wanted to ensure that the small steps being taken were taken responsibly, and these amendments will certainly help with that.

As I was saying, we had some serious concerns about this bill before it was sent to committee. We were concerned about the provisions on mediation, the risks of political interference in investigations into workplace harassment, the definition of key terms, and the priority given to protecting victims and their rights. For example, according to the previous wording of the bill, a person

who was a victim of harassment by their immediate supervisor had to deal directly with their harasser, meaning the very person who attacked the complainant.

•(1240)

Hon. members can appreciate how that might put the victim in an awkward position. An amendment was proposed to ensure that the complainant could talk to a third party. Let us not forget that this applies to all federal public service employees. Accordingly, in some cases, we could be talking about corporations or small businesses, unionized or not. It was important for us to consider these realities. That is why we proposed an amendment, which was accepted, in order to ensure that a victim does not have to go through their harasser in the event that the victim feels that the situation warrants a formal complaint.

The Conservative members of our committee also successfully introduced an amendment to establish strict deadlines for harassment investigations so they are completed in a timely fashion. This bill requires companies to adopt a harassment policy and enforce it through mediation and, when necessary, investigations by independent investigators. This bill is designed to prevent victims of harassment from being victimized twice. That is what happens when a victim of harassment gets involved in a process that ends up being a whole new nightmare when it comes to delays. We introduced provisions that will make this whole process regulation-based and not in the act itself. We will hold consultations with various stakeholders to establish timelines for the process.

Our team also introduced and supported mandatory sexual harassment training. One of the main focuses of the government's approach in this bill is prevention. If we want to eliminate harassment, we must work on prevention. Here in the House of Commons, this group of parliamentarians currently receives training on this issue. Training is key to changing mindsets. This was missing from the bill, but there is now a training component in the bill as a result of our proposed amendments. Obviously, we have to consider the realities of the labour market, but a variety of options can be put forward to make the process effective and rational.

Furthermore, an amendment was proposed to allow former employees who had claimed to be victims of harassment to file a complaint. To protect the integrity of the process, I brought up a firewall clause. All of this can be done within a reasonable time. Another important measure is that the bill could be reviewed in five years. One of my colleagues proposed this amendment.

There is one amendment to the bill that I wish had been accepted but, unfortunately, it was rejected outright by the government. We were disappointed because the amendment would have ensured that a victim could turn to the Department of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour if they thought the process was not being conducted properly. One of our ongoing concerns is that potential victims will have to jump through hoops if they must first turn to their employer to file a complaint. The employer will initially suggest mediation, then there will be an independent investigation, and, after that, recommendations will be made.

Government Orders

Another area where the bill is weak is in the application of sanctions if the investigator makes recommendations in a case of harassment.

• (1245)

When an individual believes that they have been wronged, how can they resolve the situation and move forward if, as in past cases we have seen, the employer has not fully accepted its responsibilities? Now, with this legislation, the government will be able to tell companies to do their job and apply the law. We are aware of the delays this may cause.

That is why the official opposition moved an amendment to have section 127.1(1.1) read as follows:

In the case of a complaint relating to an occurrence of harassment or violence in a work place at which less than 20 employees are normally employed, the employee who believes on reasonable grounds that there has been a contravention of this Part may refer his or her complaint to the Minister in accordance with subsection (8).

I have to say, the federal government is not leading the way in addressing harassment and sexual violence. Several provinces, such as Quebec, instituted processes and mechanisms over a decade ago that allow employees to report harassment directly to the department of labour, which in Quebec is known as the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, or CNESST. Sadly, this option currently does not exist in the federal government because investigators examine only the process, not the ins and outs of a particular situation. The government really missed an opportunity here. It could have addressed the unfortunate issue of harassment and violence in the workplace much more vigorously. That amendment was rejected. It was intended to give the bill more teeth and provide victims with a tool to ensure that the employer's process is carried out properly. This was regrettably a missed opportunity.

Awareness is another issue that gets little mention in the bill. We asked for mandatory training. The government says a lot of things, but it needs to provide the necessary tools. There was no mention in the minister's remarks and subsequent discussions with government colleagues of any measure for monitoring compliance with the spirit of the act by raising employee awareness, whether in the public sector, on Parliament Hill, or in the private sector.

For these reasons, we believe the bill could have been better, but as the saying goes, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. We therefore plan to support this bill.

I want to thank all the committee members, especially the chair, the member for Cambridge, who did his job well. He made sure the bill moved forward in a very quick and timely fashion so that we could pass this bill and send a message that the Parliament of Canada does not tolerate workplace harassment.

• (1250)

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's remarks. As he said, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

I am pleased to see the new obligations employers will have under the Canada Labour Code. I would like to reiterate that those three obligations are to prevent harassment and violence in the workplace,

to intervene when harassment or violence occurs, and to support any employee who has been the victim of harassment or violence.

My colleague sits on the committee. I think it is a good thing that there will be an annual report and a five-year review. It is important that the act continue to be strengthened. We will ensure that it is reviewed every five years. I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about that.

• (1255)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for her question and her interest in this important issue.

I think that, today, all parliamentarians recognize that we need to do everything in our power to eliminate harassment. As I explained in my speech, there are additional measures that we would have liked the government to implement. In committee, we managed to ensure that the bill would be reviewed in five years. In my opinion, one aspect of the act that will need to be reviewed is the one that I talked about in my speech, and that is to ensure that Labour Canada inspectors are able to intervene and serve as an avenue for victims, which is not currently the case. Right now, employers must follow the process but that option is not made available to victims. I like what they have done in Quebec. Five years is a long way off, but as the saying goes, it is never too late to do the right thing.

It is important that the Government of Canada and Parliament send the message that we take harassment seriously and that we are putting measures in place to eliminate harassment in our workplaces.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for the work we did in committee on Bill C-65. I did not think it would be possible to set partisanship aside to work on and advance a topic as important as workplace harassment, violence, and sexual harassment.

In committee, my colleague was worried that psychological harassment is not clearly defined in the bill. I would like to hear his thoughts on this and to know why this should have been included in the bill.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Quebec for her comments. We did indeed have the opportunity to work together on improving this bill.

I would like to start by saying that the amendment supported by our party was to ensure that victims who lodge a complaint in a unionized workplace have access to a representative. It is a big deal for a victim to lodge a complaint against an organization, so it would be good to have support. We were pleased to support my colleague's amendment to this effect.

With respect to her kind words about working with Conservatives, I will say, for the third time today, as the saying goes, "try it and you'll love it". I hope that we will have the chance to work together again on other bills.

Government Orders

As for her specific question, there is indeed a definition that combines two words. It is quite rare to see one definition for two different concepts. The bill is now before the House of Commons. It will go to the Senate and will be reviewed in five years. I think we should make a clear distinction between “psychological harassment” and “violence”, because the current definition does not do so. I know that my colleague agreed with me. We would be on the same side in this battle.

[*English*]

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say how refreshing it is for us in the House to all be on the same page, to put partisanship aside, and to come up with legislation that is in the best interests of all of us. This bill is an example of that. We all agree that we have to work our best to ensure that harassment in the workplace is limited or prevented, and that people feel comfortable reporting.

In the spirit of collaboration in committee work, I would like to ask the member about an amendment that was unanimously accepted at the committee to remove the minister from any possible interference. We know the members all agreed with that, but I wonder if he could expand on the reason that this amendment was put forward and supported.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question, and I thank my colleague opposite for it.

The committee members all wanted to eliminate political interference. That is why they unanimously agreed to the amendment proposed by my colleague from Lethbridge after a convivial discussion. It was a breakthrough because this important amendment enabled all parliamentarians to recommend supporting the bill, which does not change the rights of parliamentarians but does institute zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace.

That was one bright spot for the committee. I wish there had been more on other issues that we feel are just as important, especially when it comes to victims, but we must give credit where credit is due. This amendment was agreed to unanimously, and it is without question an improvement over the original version of the bill.

• (1300)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

He told us a lot about the committee's work, which several opposition members contributed to. He also mentioned specific missed opportunities, amendments that would have made the bill more helpful to people dealing with the kinds of situations this bill strives to address.

As my colleague said, everyone on this side of the House, myself included, intends to support this bill. However, I would like to hear more from him about the amendments the committee could have made, amendments the Senate may consider in the future.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard, a young parliamentarian with a bright future ahead of him. I had the privilege of knowing him before he became an MP. Time certainly does fly.

Indeed, it is important to call a spade a spade. We have taken a step in the right direction when it comes to definitions, but it is not enough. In order to create effective regulations, it is important to define and distinguish the difference between harassment and violence. Furthermore, as I was saying, we should always try to put ourselves in the victims' shoes. We know how hard it is for them to file a complaint. We must also protect the rights of all those involved.

The department of labour will play an active intervention role, which is currently not the case. On that point, as a result of the committee's regrettable dawdling, Canada has now fallen behind. We would like Canada to be a leader. This is a missed opportunity, but there will be other opportunities, including in the Senate, as my colleague mentioned, and during subsequent stages, to provide additional tools to eliminate harassment in our workplaces.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by paying tribute to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the work it did on Bill C-65. I took part in that work myself. I especially want to honour my colleague from Salaberry—Suroit for the tremendous efforts she put in. We worked on this bill together, and I am very proud of it. She even managed to get the committee to adopt a few of the NDP's amendments.

Bill C-65 is intended to prevent workplace harassment and violence. It is a general interest bill. This was not a partisan issue. When we were listening to the witnesses and studying the bill, our focus was on survivors. Without wanting to speak for the committee's other members, those are the people we were thinking about during the course of our study.

As I said earlier, harassment and violence, especially sexual harassment and violence, are too important an issue to allow partisan politics to creep in. I think that was something the committee members were really aware of. The bill needs to once and for all free up speech, restore confidence, and empower victims to speak out about sexual harassment without fear. Workplace harassment and violence are still widespread today, even here in Parliament, I am sad to say. That is why the NDP is going to support the principle and spirit behind Bill C-65. We are going to vote in favour of this bill when the time comes.

However, we still have some misgivings. We think Bill C-65 only partially meets its goal of strengthening the harassment and violence prevention regime. Bill C-65 does not address every concern. Far from it. Judging from the emails and calls I have received, the unions are not particularly reassured either.

Government Orders

Here are a few examples. On April 26, the national president of the Canadian Union of Public employees contacted me to discuss “two serious flaws in Bill C-65 that will undermine the rights of workers affected by violence or harassment in the workplace.” What flaws could be so worrisome that the union felt compelled to urge the minister to correct them immediately?

I am referring to the exclusion of health and safety committees from two steps processes. First, they are excluded from the complaint process and, second, they are excluded from the investigation process. The complaints process concerning harassment and violence and the investigation process must both continue to rely on the expertise of these committees. Excluding them makes no sense to us.

Members of health and safety committees have received training and have a finger on the pulse of the workplace. Management and employees usually have equal representation, and members are experienced, know the culture, and know what is happening on the work floor. Who better to provide solutions, investigate, and also serve the victims and provide a sense of security and confidence when a survivor comes forward as a victim of harassment, or sexual violence or harassment?

The surprising excuse given by the Liberals to justify their measure was the purported breach of victims' confidentiality if they had to take part in the investigations of these committees. In my view, this is not a valid pretext for many reasons, which I would like to outline.

First of all, the decision to bring these committees into the process came from victims themselves. This was an option offered to them. It was a possibility open to victims. I am speaking in the past tense because, unfortunately, with the amendment in effect, they will no longer have this option. It was an additional choice that was available to the victim, not a constraint that was imposed. When someone is familiar with the victim's working conditions, the victim will feel understood, and this may help. This might have helped encourage people to report such incidents.

● (1305)

Second, to add to my argument, to date, these joint health and safety committees have always received these complaints and have successfully carried out the harassment investigations. Their modern investigative methods have always emphasized respect for victims' privacy. By excluding these committees from the investigative process, Bill C-65 is about to eliminate decades of experience, training, and work. I really want to stress the training and work aspect that will be wasted.

That is not all. If what the Liberals really wanted to do was protect victims' privacy and confidentiality, then someone needs to explain why they opposed many of my amendments. I had the pleasure of proposing nearly 20 amendments along with my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît during the committee study of Bill C-65, but only three of them were accepted by the Liberals, and even that took some convincing. In many cases, the other amendments were not even discussed. On a number of occasions, the Liberals chose to go straight to a vote and would not even explain why they were refusing the amendments.

Among the amendments that were voted down without any explanation was a very simple proposal made by the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. Allow me to explain it. Bill C-65 seeks to exclude joint employer-employee health and safety committees from investigations for privacy reasons. The problem is that, right now, these committees still continue to provide victims with unquestionable expertise. The logical solution proposed by the witnesses was to give these committees codes of practice and a code of ethics that would guarantee the privacy of victims. Did the Liberals oppose the CSN's recommendation without any explanation out of stubbornness or because they did not understand it? It seems to me that excluding these committees from the investigation process is a serious decision. There was no shortage of witnesses who supported amending the bill. Unions, associations, and law firms all supported the amendment. A quick look at the committee transcripts is all it takes to see that they all disagreed with this exclusion.

There is more. The expertise of the joint health and safety committees spans decades, but that alone does not explain why witnesses adamantly defended keeping them in the investigative process. The other reason, which is rather important, is the exceptional diversity of the investigators who make up the joint committees. The right of joint committees to conduct investigations has until now made it possible for victims to benefit from an incredible diversity of investigators in terms of colour, religion, age, and sex. Such diversity in the profile of investigators is invaluable.

Unfortunately, it is clear that Bill C-65 has completely shelved this aspect, which is inconsistent with the recommendations of the International Labour Office. In investigations into sexual harassment, the victims will not be able to benefit from the expertise or the extreme diversity within the joint health and safety committees.

That brings us back to what I was saying earlier. Members of the joint health and safety committees come from the workplace and represent all the communities. They are people we can confide in, people we can relate to if we are victims of harassment or violence in the workplace. They can make us feel understood. Unfortunately, with the changes made to Bill C-65, victims can no longer rely on this service.

● (1310)

It would still have been possible to include in the bill a provision to ensure the diversity of investigators, similar to that made possible by joint committees, for all investigators. That is exactly what one of my amendments proposed. It set out that the choice of investigators, although no longer the purview of the joint committees, must reflect the diversity of Canadian society. Thus, the diversity of investigators, which until now was made possible by the joint committees, would be perpetuated even though the committees were excluded from the investigation. A balanced representation of Canadian diversity would be assured.

Government Orders

Apparently, the recommendation made by the UN Secretariat concerning labour was not good enough for the Liberals, because they did not let Canada adopt legislation to guarantee equality and non-discrimination in the investigators' profile. We need to remember that minorities are disproportionately affected by workplace harassment and violence. By "minority" I mean members of an ethnic or religious minority as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex workers, and migrant workers.

That is why the profile of individuals responsible for the investigation must at all costs reflect diversity. However, it seems that our legislation will not take into account national diversity in the selection of investigators, and that is very unfortunate. Those are some of the aspects that were important to me. After spending all those hours listening to and reading witnesses' recommendations, we drafted amendments that were not even debated.

I would like to move on to other aspects of the bill that are also cause for concern. There are many of them. Let us first talk about the development of employer policies on harassment and violence. Some employers said on several occasions that they did not understand exactly what was expected of them when it comes to workplace policies. They need guidance on writing and implementing their anti-harassment policies. It is important to give employers clear instructions. They are waiting for such instructions in order to determine whether they are on the right track in complying with the legislation.

Since the primary purpose of Bill C-65 is to bring about a major change in political and corporate culture when it comes to harassment, we had hoped for more from the government in this regard, but that is not currently the case. When the witnesses appeared before the committee, they expressed their concerns about the effectiveness of employer anti-harassment policies. Leading law firms Rubin Thomlison and Fogler Rubinoff came up with one solution.

In order to give employers guidance and enhance protection for employees, the witnesses recommended that the Canada Labour Code set out guidelines for what is expected of a corporate policy on harassment in the workplace. The guidelines should include information about the process for getting immediate assistance in the case of harassment and about the fundamental aspects of privacy protection and the processing of complaints. I want to point out that companies also requested such guidelines.

The NDP's amendment would kill two birds with one stone. It would help guide employers in developing their internal policies and also enhance protection for employees, who would now be covered by effective prevention policies.

● (1315)

That amendment also would have prevented potentially ill intentioned employers from shirking their basic harassment prevention obligations through the use of deliberately complex anti-harassment policies that ultimately end up disincentivizing victims. We are talking here about how important it is to have prevention policies. Prevention in our workplaces is vital.

Even here in Parliament, people have been talking about a change in culture for several months now. I myself am now an employer. I

have staff working for my constituents in Jonquière. I am their employer, and I have a duty to ensure they have a healthy environment, a place they can work that is completely safe and free of all forms of harassment and violence. Being on the Hill, we need to attend many events and meet with a lot of people. Sometimes we have interns. Here in the House, for example, we have pages who work with us every day. We must ensure their safety and provide them with a healthy environment. Even businesses need to have clear guidelines and policies so that they too can provide proper training and a healthy environment that is free of harassment and violence.

Unfortunately, it seems the Liberals would rather leave employers guessing about how to write their internal policies because not one of them bothered to say anything about this measure, let alone come out in favour of it. I do not know why, and nobody ever explained why my amendment was rejected. I hope to find out why today.

Would it not make sense for expectations around policies, specifically anti-harassment policies, to be in the Canada Labour Code? That is another thing that is conspicuously absent from Bill C-65. Once again, there were certainly plenty of opportunities to address the problem, and plenty of witnesses who spoke in favour of such a measure. All our efforts to strengthen the prevention aspect of Bill C-65 were apparently for naught. The Liberals put forward an amendment to include a five-year review, which was not at all objectionable and was in fact more than welcome. We all recognized the importance of including a provision to review the legislation over the years. Reviewing workplace violence and harassment provisions every five years is a perfectly justifiable improvement.

What is less justifiable is that Liberals refused to support one of my amendments to make the five-year review more effective. The Liberals proposed that the department publish statistics on workplace harassment and violence every five years. This is good. It complies with almost all of the recommendations of their own report published by Employment and Social Development Canada in March 2017. I said "almost" because this report lamented the "insufficient data on workplace harassment and violence", in particular regarding sexual harassment. The report also mentioned the need for data to be collected, in order to address this lack of data. We need data.

I have much more to say about this bill. We did a comprehensive study, we heard from many witnesses, and we also managed to keep partisanship out of the debate. As I mentioned earlier, we will support the spirit and principle of the bill for all survivors. We will also encourage people to report these situations and help maintain a workplace free from violence and harassment for workers across Canada.

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• (1320)

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for all of her work on this file. I listened very carefully to her criticisms and her positive comments concerning the bill.

In my opinion, confidentiality is of the utmost importance in such matters, so given the content of the bill, does my colleague not agree that confidentiality should be better protected, since the aim is to encourage more female and even male victims of harassment to come forward and testify?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very pertinent question.

Confidentiality is crucial in all areas, whether they involve complaints of violence, harassment or sexual harassment or whether they are merely the issues we as members of Parliament deal with on a daily basis. That is why I do not think that removing the joint health and safety committees is justified, since we have a code of ethics. That is what was proposed, and I think it is viable.

As I mentioned earlier in my speech, workers who get involved in health and safety committees receive training and learn what is going on in the workplace. They are therefore aware of possible reactions and repercussions. They are capable of discussing situations without naming names in order to effect changes in the workplace in collaboration with their employer.

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance, but it is not by removing the joint health and safety committees from the complaint and investigation processes that we will better protect it. Confidentiality is inherent to the very nature of these people's work and their involvement. It is an important element. By removing these committees, we are depriving survivors of a crucial option in the workplace.

• (1325)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Jonquière for her extremely enlightening speech on how we can help survivors of workplace harassment and violence feel better and safer and encourage them to report these incidents.

She concluded her speech by talking about insufficient data and some amendments she proposed in committee to provide more information about the current state of affairs in the workplace and to improve the situation. She spoke about a lack of prevention and the importance of using updated information. Could she tell us a bit more about this?

What would she have liked to see in this respect in the bill?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît, who also actively participated in the study of Bill C-65 in committee. I would like to thank her for bringing her experience to the consideration of the amendments and the clause-by-clause review of the bill.

To answer her question, we support the five-year report, since it is important to assess our methods. However, we would have liked greater openness on the issue of data. That is the problem. As the bill currently stands, employers are not required to log or report

incidents. Writing reports is all well and good, but they have to be based on hard data if the situation is to improve. We need to know what happened in order to analyze the situation and also plan for the future and keep improving the system. This might not seem important, but, according to Employment and Social Development Canada, we have very little data. An improvement in this area would have allowed us to make more enlightened changes in five years.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague if she does not think that it would be better to have a standardized complaint process for all types of complaints instead of having several different processes. Is it not better to have a standardized process so people know what to expect?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague once again for her very appropriate question. This very issue raised quite a few eyebrows, including among the witnesses appearing before the committee. Survivors need to feel safe. Unfortunately, in some workplaces I have seen, it is the employer who is harassing, bullying or sexually harassing employees. If survivors have no choices, and the perpetrator is the employer, what can they do?

We need to offer them this choice and abide by strict ethical guidelines on confidentiality in order to gain their trust. We want to offer every opportunity for survivors to feel safe enough to report the incident and follow through with the process. Victims of violence and harassment often feel isolated.

If people do not trust the process, we need to find another way to help them feel better and safe. Everyone benefits from greater possibilities. Survivors will feel comfortable and follow through with the process, whatever path they choose. What is important is that they have a choice. In my opinion, that is what matters with Bill C-65.

• (1330)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to another issue that my colleague from Jonquière mentioned in her speech. She said that the Liberals closed the door on the possibility of giving employers help to develop internal prevention policies and their own rules against workplace harassment and violence.

Shockingly, even though we are studying a bill on the prevention of harassment and violence in the workplace, the Liberals voted against that amendment without even explaining why.

What would have been the benefits of helping employers develop internal policies? If employers do not know how to address these issues, it is a little hard to establish rules that are both sound and clear for both employers and employees.

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised a very good point about clear rules. If we want to improve the situation, if we want training to be available, if we want to initiate cultural change, we will need clear rules and directives; simply snapping our fingers will not do.

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To go back to my example from earlier, as an employer on Parliament Hill, we need to have rules and develop a code of conduct. That is what companies expect.

I said earlier, in my speech and in my answer to a question, that a report will be tabled in five years. If we do not put out clear rules, how are we to measure companies' compliance with the spirit of Bill C-65? How are they to know what to focus on?

The solution is to get on the right track. However, we need to collaborate and establish rules that companies will be able to follow. That is how we can ensure that workers get a safe work environment that is free from harassment, violence, and sexual harassment; that is the point I wish to emphasize most of all.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on, I want to remind all hon. members of the House that, at 1:55 p.m., there will be an emergency test on all of our cellphones and computers. This is a nationwide test. I would ask members who have a cellphone or a computer with them to turn those devices off or take them outside the House so as not to unduly disrupt proceedings.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Central Nova. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code regarding harassment and violence, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

[English]

Bill C-65 seeks to enhance the current legislative framework that deals with harassment and violence in federally regulated workplaces.

• (1335)

[Translation]

The bill proposes replacing all laws and policies with a single, comprehensive approach that covers every possible type of harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

It would also expand the scope of these laws and policies to cover parliamentary workplaces, such as the Senate, the Library of Parliament, the House of Commons, and political staffers on Parliament Hill.

[English]

As a member of the committee that reviewed the bill, I would like to take a moment to thank all members for their collaborative efforts to strengthen the proposed legislation.

[Translation]

At committee, members heard many compelling testimonies and debated for hours over the course of a number of meetings. For example, we heard from Vice News journalist Hilary Beaumont, author of a recent investigative report into workplace harassment on Parliament Hill.

[English]

Over the past three months, Ms. Beaumont interviewed more than 40 women who work on Parliament Hill, including current and former MPs, as well as lobbyists, journalists, staff, and interns. In her testimony, Ms. Beaumont stated that it quickly became apparent that female employees were more vulnerable to harassment than their male counterparts.

[Translation]

The women she interviewed told her stories about their own experiences: sexist comments, touching and even sexual assault. Some women she spoke to said that they were dismissed or lost job opportunities after trying to report workplace abuse. Some of the women interviewed who currently work on the Hill say that they would not even know how to report harassment if they had to.

In short, Mrs. Beaumont found that existing measures were simply nowhere near adequate.

[English]

That is why the bill is so important. The importance of the bill is something we have all agreed on from the start. This fact was especially apparent during many of the committee meetings where we worked tirelessly to strengthen the legislation.

[Translation]

From this perspective, here are the many changes that were proposed: defining harassment and violence in the Canada Labour Code; making training mandatory, meaning that employers would be required to make courses available to staff and to follow them themselves; specifically referencing preventing occurrences of harassment in the purpose of the bill; adding a section requiring that the provisions respecting harassment and violence in Bill C-65 be reviewed every five years; requiring that the Minister of Labour produce an annual report on harassment and violence in every workplace under federal jurisdiction; and, for the purposes of applying part III of the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, giving the deputy minister powers normally given to the minister to avoid the possibility of any conflict of interest.

[English]

These amendments, among others, have since been adopted and the result is an exceptionally strong piece of legislation that we can all be proud of.

[Translation]

However, although the bill is a big step in the right direction, and although it is essential in order to put an end to such behaviour in workplaces under federal jurisdiction and on Parliament Hill, our government is aware that a mere law cannot totally eliminate behaviours so deeply rooted in the Canadian workplace.

We said it many times today and we will repeat it again: we need a change of culture, and we must all help bring this change about. The good news is that such a change is well under way.

Government Orders

[English]

The global movements on social media brought a great deal of attention to this issue and shed much-needed light on it. I am immensely impressed by the bravery of those who have shared their stories. It takes so much courage to come forward and speak out against this behaviour.

[Translation]

Thanks to their courage, these conversations are taking place more and more frequently, not only in the media and politics but in workplaces the world over. People are re-evaluating their actions and the repercussions they have for others. People who have had to deal with inappropriate acts in the past or who are experiencing them now feel free to speak up. This process can be very unpleasant, but that is often the case with change. In this case, it is worth it.

We all know that these behaviours can have a long-term negative impact, not only on victims and their families, but also on employers and in terms of productivity, absenteeism and employee turnover.

There are many persistent gender norms and power imbalances in our society that keep things the way they are. The consequence is that unacceptable behaviours have been tolerated for far too long. It is time that we put an end to them. It is high time for a change.

● (1340)

[English]

Through Bill C-65, our government is taking an important step toward building a country where all Canadians are better protected from harassment and violence in the workplace, and where those who have experienced such abuse receive the support they need.

We believe that this bill will also go a long way toward putting an end to workplace violence and harassment.

[Translation]

Canadians deserve nothing less than workplaces that are free from this type of behaviour and that reflect our society's values.

I strongly encourage the members of the House of Commons to support Bill C-65 at this stage in order to give a voice to people who are vulnerable and to hold responsible those who, despite proof to the contrary, continue to believe that any form of harassment or violence in any circumstances can be acceptable.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. I listened attentively. I learned that people do not even know how to file a harassment complaint, who to talk to, or what they need to do.

How will this bill help or encourage people to file complaints?

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent and very pertinent question.

The answer is prevention. The bill includes prevention measures, including mandatory workplace training. This will allow employees and employers to see what is going on in the workplace. The bill has a major preventive aspect.

In addition, there are measures to help people feel safe enough to report inappropriate situations. We will implement the necessary

measures in our workplaces to enable them to report inappropriate behaviours.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who, like all other members of House, works to ensure that prevention of workplace harassment and violence is increasingly front and center, that preventive measures are implemented, and that survivors can safely and confidentially report situations where they felt victimized.

However, in committee, the government excluded the joint workplace health and safety committees that enable victims, survivors, to consult experts who are familiar with the workplace and its culture, committees made up of employers, employees, and experts whose job it was to hear survivors and provide them with support. That was a very helpful option for victims, especially in small workplaces. In cases where the perpetrator is the employer, it is very difficult for employees to report situations of abuse. It was therefore reassuring to be able to deal with a joint committee. The Liberals preferred to remove the joint health and safety committees, despite the fact that unions from across the country appearing before the committee recommended that they be maintained.

Does my colleague not think that it would be a better idea to reincorporate the committees into the bill in order to help change the mindset and culture in the workplace?

● (1345)

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague because we worked really hard in committee and everyone really did their part to help strengthen this bill.

I would like to remind him that there will be local committees and that they will have a major role to play in keeping workplaces safe and free from violence and harassment. These local committees will play a key role in this bill. That is what is being proposed to protect the confidentiality and privacy of all parties involved in an investigation of harassment or violence, and that is obviously our top priority.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to the hon. member for Central Nova, I want to remind all hon. members, once again, that there will be a national test at 1:55 p.m. If a member's cellphone, iPad, or computer is on in the House, it will ring out. I am sure none of us want to disturb the hon. member for Central Nova, as he has a very interesting debate and presentation to make. Therefore, I would ask members to either turn off their apparatus or, if they want to check it out to make sure it works, take it into another room, other than the House of Commons, and report back to us afterwards.

The hon. member for Central Nova.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope to meet those very high expectations you have set with your remarks.

Government Orders

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-65. This legislation would address harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in federally regulated workplaces, and for the first time, importantly, right here on Parliament Hill.

[*Translation*]

Our government's position on this is no secret. We have been saying it for some time now: harassment and violence of any kind are unacceptable and we have a clear, zero-tolerance stance on the issue.

[*English*]

Bill C-65 uses the most effective legislative and policy levers possible to help put an end to workplace harassment and violence and their consequences, in Parliament and in all federally regulated workplaces. We all know that the distinct power imbalances found here on Parliament Hill can cause damage to working relationships and also to the people who work here. These imbalances perpetuate a culture where some people with a lot of power use it, knowingly or unknowingly, to victimize others. However, this culture is not exclusive to the world of politics.

[*Translation*]

According to a 2018 Angus Reid study, 52% of Canadian women have experienced workplace sexual harassment and 28% were subject to non-consensual sexual touching. While those numbers are outrageous, what is maybe most staggering is that 89% of the women surveyed reported they have taken steps to avoid unwanted sexual advances. That is nearly nine in 10 women having to deal with inappropriate behaviour when they are trying to do their job.

[*English*]

If the recent #MeToo and Time's Up social media movements have taught us anything, it is that workplace harassment and violence, and in particular sexual harassment and sexual violence, are toxic behaviours that affect a shocking number of people. This issue is pervasive, not only in the workplace but across our entire society. It is a problem that has been going on and tolerated for far too long. Only now are we calling out this behaviour and saying, "No more. This has to end here."

Having these conversations and changing the discourse are extremely important, but we cannot let this momentum die. We also have to take concrete, lasting action. That is precisely what we want to do with Bill C-65.

Essentially, the bill would help put an end to workplace harassment and violence by requiring employers to take action on three specific fronts: preventing incidents of harassment and violence, responding effectively to those incidents when they do occur, and, finally, supporting affected employees.

I am incredibly proud of the House for the unanimous support the bill received at second reading, as well as the positive feedback it received at committee. Now we are calling on the House to continue that full support of Bill C-65 at third reading.

●(1350)

[*Translation*]

It is our job as a government to stand up for the rights of all Canadians. Everyone deserves to work in an environment free from harassment and violence. This is why we introduced Bill C-65 in November of last year after consulting stakeholders, experts, and Canadians across the country.

Canadians told us that incidents are still vastly under-reported. They told us that, when incidents are reported, the follow-up, if any, is often ineffective and flawed.

[*English*]

We also consulted with MPs and senators, who made it clear that these behaviours need to be addressed. We heard similar sentiments through many committee consultations with experts and interested parties.

The message has been incredibly clear. What we have in place today is not doing the job. We need a comprehensive approach that focuses on preventing behaviours before they happen, responding effectively when they do, and supporting survivors after the fact. With Bill C-65, I have confidence that we are doing just that.

The basis of this initiative is the protection of employees through preventative measures that would ensure that harassment and violence do not happen in the first instance. The amended Canada Labour Code would specifically require employers to prevent such incidents and protect employees from these behaviours. I would ask members to allow me just a moment to explain.

Employers would be required to have a workplace harassment and violence prevention policy that is developed with employees through their workplace committees. Employers would also need to ensure that their employees receive training, and that they themselves undergo training, on the prevention of harassment and violence in the workplace.

Employees who believe they have been victims of harassment or violence, or have witnessed these behaviours, as a first step would report the incident to their employer or a person designated in the workplace harassment and violence prevention policy, and they would have to work to resolve the issue.

While informal resolution would be emphasized, the employee-driven resolution process would provide employees with the option of bringing in a mediator or having a competent person appointed to undertake a formal investigation.

If a competent person is appointed, following the investigation that person would issue a report, and the employer would be obligated to implement all recommendations or corrective measures set out in that report. Details regarding the informal resolution and investigation processes, including time frames for completion, would be set out in the regulations.

Government Orders

If the employee believes that the employer has not respected any part of the code or the regulations, he or she could file a complaint with the labour program. Labour program officials would then investigate and take enforcement action if they found that a contravention of the code or its associated regulations in fact occurred.

Reporting an incident requires a lot of courage. I have an enormous amount of respect for those who do choose to come forward, because fear of reprisal and stigma associated with being a victim of harassment or sexual violence can be a powerful deterrent to those who want to report an incident. The proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code would protect the privacy of employees but encourage those who are victimized to come forward at the same time.

Finally, under Bill C-65, employers would be required to support affected employees, with details to be identified through the regulatory process.

In addition, the labour program would put in place an outreach hub and a 1-800 call support line, as well as education materials and tools to further support employees.

[*Translation*]

Everyone deserves to work in an environment free from harassment and violence. These are far-reaching measures that I believe will make the workplace better for everyone; a place where personal growth is fostered and where people are permitted to express their talents and their skills.

I want to thank the members of the committee for their thoughtful review of Bill C-65 and their efforts to improve the proposed legislation. Members' collaboration across party lines has led to important amendments that will strengthen our bill.

[*English*]

During the course of this study, it was my pleasure to sub in during a few meetings to really see the non-partisan nature of the important work that was taking place. For example, after careful consideration of the points raised by witnesses and members of the committee, we included a clear definition of "harassment" and "violence". We also included a provision regarding mandatory training for employees and employers and specified that the department would now be responsible for producing an annual report. These measures are going to help ensure that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities and that we are kept accountable by measuring our progress and addressing negative trends if and when they arise.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the hard work of the committee and those who shared their insights and expertise, I believe that what we have before us today is a strong piece of legislation that will make a real difference in the lives of millions of Canadians. While Bill C-65 will only apply directly to federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces, it will send a clear and important message that these behaviours are not acceptable, anywhere, and we cannot afford to tolerate them any longer.

●(1355)

[*English*]

I call on all members of Parliament, regardless of political affiliation, to do the right thing once again, as they did at second reading, and show their support for this important bill. Together, we can finally help eradicate harassment and violence in the workplace in Canada.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that women are disproportionately impacted by harassment in the workplace, particularly women of colour, indigenous women, and immigrant women. Could my colleague elaborate on the comprehensiveness of this legislation, particularly on the prevention strategy of training for both employees and employers, and on the use of a 1-800 number? How will that help reinforce those who might not naturally come forward?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the hon. member's outstanding work in putting women forward who come from different backgrounds. The recognition of the intersectional nature of harassment and violence cannot be overstated here.

When we fail to educate employers and employees on the rights and the need to not only encourage people to come forward, but to also deal with complaints appropriately, we fail all of society not just the individual who has been affected. When women of colour, women from different backgrounds, or people who suffer discrimination in different ways are not able to be their full selves in the workplace, the entire Canadian economy and society suffers as a result. We need to create rules and environments to allow people to be their best selves. When my neighbours are discriminated against, that does not just affect them, it affects me in my workplace as well.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his advocacy in trying to prevent harassment in the workplace.

One of the concerns I have with Bill C-65 is that if a complaint comes forward that involves members of the House from different parties, the Minister of Labour would be able to arbitrate the case. I do not think that is the kind of independent person one would like to have overseeing that. I would not want any people challenging the results of any findings because they felt that the person was partisan.

Could the member comment on how he sees this working?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of working with the hon. member across the aisle while she served capably as the chair of the status of women committee.

Statements by Members

This is an important issue. The person investigating a complaint cannot have some kind of partisan interest, recognizing that the minister may not be from one party or another at any given point in time. I understand that the committee considered this and in fact agreed on an amendment that passed the power to oversee those cases to the deputy minister, who is not necessarily in a partisan role. As we know, when the government changes, the civil service may remain the same. Although I was not part of the conversation at the time, this was one of the issues on which committee members were able to demonstrate their ability to co-operate to ensure the public had faith and confidence in the process and that it would not be abused for partisan gain.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Central Nova will have two minutes of questions coming to him when we resume.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, today begins National Nursing Week. Every year at this time we celebrate and thank the hard-working nurses of Canada.

This week was chosen because on May 12, 1820, Florence Nightingale was born. If Florence Nightingale had been a man, she would not be remembered as the “Lady with the Lamp”. She would be remembered as the father of public health care. She would be remembered as the originator of statistics for the purpose of making an argument. She invented the pie chart in order to demonstrate to policy-makers how many more soldiers were dying from infectious diseases in hospitals than were dying on the battlefield.

Florence Nightingale would be remembered for many things, but as nurses can tell us, they are often underappreciated and unrecognized for their hard-working, life-saving work across the country.

For the men and women of the working nurses of Canada, we value them and we thank them.

* * *

● (1400)

PAGE PROGRAM

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago, former Speaker James Jerome, launched a new program to attract smart, socially minded, young Canadians from all parts of our country to the House of Commons where they had a unique opportunity to learn the inner workings of Parliament.

[Translation]

The pages are a credit to their roles, demonstrating dignity, professionalism, and such great potential, in all kinds of ways. Since October 1978, fully 1,603 pages have participated in the program. Former pages include the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Other former pages like Marc Bosc, Katie Telford, Rheal Lewis, and

Nathaniel Mullin have also used their experience in their work on Parliament Hill.

[English]

I ask all members to rise with me to thank and congratulate the House of Commons page program on 40 years of exemplary service.

* * *

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr Speaker, as the shadow minister of health and, more important, the proud mother of a nurse, I am honoured to celebrate National Nursing Week.

Every day across Canada, 421,000 nurses work on the front lines of our health care system, giving professional, compassionate, and quality care to their patients. This year's theme, #YesThisIsNursing, was selected from over 300 submissions by students, nurses, and other Canadians. The theme is meant to speak to the diverse and ever-expanding role played by Canadian nurses.

Nursing is a very hard job, but nurses conduct their duties with dignity and excellence. I thank the nurses from BlueWater Health and the many home care and palliative care nurses in Sarnia—Lambton.

On behalf of Her Majesty's opposition, we commend all nurses for their contribution to our nation. I thank them for their service.

* * *

[Translation]

ÉCO-NATURE

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, founded in 1987 by volunteers, Éco-Nature has become indispensable to the people of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin over the years. It is also part of a wonderful ecotourism experience.

At the 2018 Dunamis awards gala, Éco-Nature won in the tourism enterprise of the year category. This honour recognizes all their hard work to maintain activities despite challenges associated with flooding and the construction of a new discovery centre. The 2018 summer season looks very promising, as Éco-Nature plans to gradually reopen its centre.

I invite everyone to come and discover this natural treasure in the heart of Laval.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to recognize National Nursing Week. This week we celebrate International Nurses Day, Indigenous Nurses Day, and Florence Nightingale's birthday.

Statements by Members

Nurses are consistently ranked as Canada's most respected and trusted professionals, and it is no wonder. Nurses offer us care when we are most vulnerable. They are the front-line guardians of our public health care system and they work tirelessly to advocate for the needs of their patients. In particular, Canada's nurses have been a leading voice in the decades-long push for universal pharmacare in Canada.

Nurses take care of us and so we must take care of them. Unfortunately, over the past two decades, nurses have experienced an increase in workplace violence. On behalf of Canada's New Democrats, I call on all parties to work together to ensure that nurses never have to go to work fearing they will be abused.

I thank Canada's nurses for their incredible leadership in delivering better health care to all Canadians, especially my sister, Cheryl, who has been nursing for 30 years.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is growing concern over plastic waste in our oceans and lakes. Marine animals and birds are dying in alarming numbers as a result of suffocation and ingestion of plastics.

[*Translation*]

Plastic waste is making its way into the food chain and is polluting our water. To date, the world has produced eight billion tonnes of unrecycled plastic, half of it in the last 13 years. Plastic waste weighing nearly 600 million pounds is floating on the surface of our oceans, and 22 million pounds of plastic waste end up in the Great Lakes every year.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for opening a national consultation on this pressing challenge, and I encourage all Canadians to participate. I look forward to hearing from the residents of Mississauga—Lakeshore and I will welcome their involvement.

The time to act is now. It is the right thing to do, and it is the only thing to do.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

LISTENING TO QUEBECERS TOUR

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to inform all members of the House that, a few weeks ago, our party kicked off the “Listening to Quebecers” tour. We will visit every corner of Quebec to meet people from all walks of life and find out what issues matter most to them.

We are just a few steps into the tour, and already a number of issues have emerged, but the overarching theme is that the Liberal government is neglecting the regions. People feel misunderstood and forgotten.

In the coming months, we will be criss-crossing Quebec, meeting with as many people as possible and hearing what they have to say

about positioning la belle province for prosperity within our great and beautiful country, Canada. People can also share their ideas online at www.listeningtoquebecers.ca.

Our party recognized the Quebec nation and fixed the fiscal imbalance. We are the only party capable of defending Quebec's interests.

I invite everyone who wants to know more to join us for our first general council in Saint-Hyacinthe next weekend.

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[*English*]

AGA KHAN DIAMOND JUBILEE

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate His Highness the Aga Khan on his diamond jubilee, marking 60 years of tireless leadership of the Shia Ismaili Muslim community globally. On May 1, I had the pleasure of welcoming him to Ottawa as he celebrated his diamond jubilee.

His Highness promotes the shared values of pluralism, justice, compassion, and service to others. As Prime Minister Chrétien stated, “[we] may just think [it is] the “Canadian Way.” But [it is]...in short supply in today’s world. That makes...the work of the Aga Khan indispensable.” His Highness keeps persevering, undiminished and undeterred, and we need his passion and his message more than ever.

We thank His Highness for walking alongside Canada and helping us meet our SDG goals. We welcome him to Canada. It is our great privilege to celebrate his diamond jubilee. Jubilee *Mubarak*.

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MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are reminded this week to speak openly and frankly about mental health. It is an issue that can impact any one of us at any age, but today I would like to speak about the impact on our youth.

As a chaplain, I have witnessed first-hand the devastating impact of mental health challenges. It was a privilege to support hundreds of youth as they journeyed through very dark days. Seeing our young people face these challenges is absolutely heartbreaking. They feel alone and they do not feel understood. We are working on changing that.

I rise today hopeful, as our government recognizes the importance of these issues. We will continue to work to remove the stigma and to meet the challenges for all those suffering. My message for all our youth struggling with mental health issues is today is simple. We are with them and we want them well.

*Statements by Members***FACULTY OF LAW AT UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR**

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Faculty of Law at the University of Windsor. As an alumnus of Windsor law, I can attest that the three years I spent there were among the best of my life.

The Windsor Faculty of Law welcomed its first class in 1968. I began my own legal career a few years later when I enrolled as a law student at the university in 1974. I will always be grateful for the quality of education I received there and for the tremendous opportunities those years of study presented throughout my career.

Today, Windsor law school has an enrolment of 700 students with 32 full-time professors. Their vision is to inspire a community that is passionate about achieving a more just and equitable world. The foundations those students will receive will do just that and our global community will be better off for it.

I am honoured to congratulate Windsor law school on its 50th anniversary.

* * *

CANADIAN COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS ALLIANCE

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the members of the Canadian Communications Systems Alliance, or the CCSA, who were in Ottawa last week speaking about important issues related to telecommunications in Canada. The CCSA represents more than 110 independent companies that provide Internet, TV, telephone, and cell services across Canada. They serve hundreds of thousands of customers, generally outside urban markets, from coast to coast to coast. They are not the big communication companies; they include community co-operatives, family businesses, and companies owned by indigenous peoples. They work and invest in their own communities.

CCSA members connect Canadians who otherwise might not have access to critical communication services. They invest in infrastructure in areas where large companies do not. In rural areas, CCSA members are sometimes the only source of those essential communication services.

In my riding of the Long Range Mountains, I have three members: Benoit Brothers Contracting in Stephenville, Burgeo Broadcasting System in Burgeo, and Ramea Broadcasting Company in Ramea. These businesses do so much for their local—

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

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

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SAMUEL BOLDUC

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our region has some super-talented young people. I want to highlight the amazing achievement of a photography student at the Matane CEGEP.

Samuel Bolduc was awarded the title of student photographer of the year at the 2018 Sony World Photography Awards, one of the most prestigious international competitions in the world. The award was announced at a ceremony in London on April 19.

Samuel Bolduc is the first Canadian to win this award. He is the pride of Matane, of his CEGEP, and of his photography program. This exceptionally talented and amazingly creative young artist is eminently deserving of this international recognition.

I am extremely pleased to share Samuel's success with all my colleagues in the House of Commons. I have no doubt that this prestigious award will kick-start a very promising career for this talented young man. Congratulations, Samuel.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Conservatives, we believe in fighting criminals who commit violent crimes; we believe in upholding victims and their families, and supporting law-abiding citizens. The Liberals are more interested in doing the opposite. With Bill C-75, the Liberals are proposing to reduce penalties for serious crimes, such as assault with a weapon, participating or leaving Canada to participate in terrorist activities, and participating in the activities of organized crime.

This bill will only weaken our justice system and sends the wrong message to Canadians. Canadians can be assured that we as Conservatives, will always stand up for the protection of law-abiding citizens and will put the rights of victims first. That is why, when we were in government, we passed tough on crime legislation, including the Victims Bill of Rights, which that party voted for. Unlike the Liberals, we put our words into action.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to welcome the Prime Minister, the premier, and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development to Cambridge for an announcement last Friday of \$110 million in federal funding, along with \$110 million provincially that will complement the \$1.4-billion investment by Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada for its plants in Cambridge and Woodstock.

This funding will go toward a new advanced hybrid manufacturing platform and provide 450 new jobs, 1,000 new co-op positions, and protect 8,000 direct manufacturing jobs. Cambridge and Waterloo region are known for their high-tech sector, innovation, and advanced manufacturing capabilities. For over 30 years, Toyota in Cambridge has continued to find success in the ever-changing automotive field while providing stable and good-paying jobs.

I thank everyone who made this announcement possible.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my NDP colleagues and I have been asking for immediate and effective action on the opioid crisis over and over again. There are 37 families throughout my riding of Essex who are mourning the losses of those they love from opioid overdoses. Our losses are more than one and a half times higher than the provincial average. Families continue to struggle, desperate to get their loved ones the help they need to overcome their addiction. Sadly, to date, the government has failed to provide real leadership on this crisis. Not only has it chosen not to declare this as a national public health emergency, it has failed to hold opioid manufacturers to account for their role in this epidemic.

Today, I stand with my NDP colleagues and call on the government to launch a criminal investigation into the role played by drug manufacturers in fuelling and greatly profiting from the opioid crisis. The government must also pursue substantial compensation from these manufacturers for the cost of addiction to our public health system and communities. This crisis takes a heavy emotional toll on families, friends, neighbours, and loved ones. Immediate action is needed before any more lives are lost to this deadly drug.

* * *

• (1415)

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know the Liberal government's record on electoral reform, and it is not pretty. The Liberals have continuously tried to use every trick in the book to quash opposition debate and to tip the electoral scales in their favour. They tried to quell debate by introducing a motion that would allow unprecedented and undemocratic Liberal control over the ins and outs of parliamentary business. They broke their promise to Canadians on electoral reform when they could not push through an electoral system that experts said would have only benefited the Liberal Party. They have tried to force through changes in committee that would have had the Liberals skip work on Fridays and the Prime Minister show up to work only one day a week. They have used the ministers' offices and Prime Minister's Office for partisan cash for access fundraisers. Now, they are trying to force through changes in Bill C-76 that would make up to one million votes susceptible to fraud in the election. Do the Liberals not know that Canadians can see through their tricks, and simply do not trust them to make electoral changes that are in the benefit of Canadian democracy and not just of the Liberal Party?

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NEW BRUNSWICK FLOODING

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to be here today, as my heart is in New Brunswick, where thousands have been impacted by flooding. During times of struggle, we see the hearts of a community, their true resilience and resourcefulness.

This past weekend, I worked alongside neighbours packing sandbags, saw others showing up with a truck, a pump, a shovel, a container of cookies, or their own two hands to help to try to protect memories and possessions. My New Brunswick colleagues and I

would like to thank the volunteers for their tireless work: the emergency measures teams, first responders, and corporate citizens, and also the commitment of the municipal works departments, provincial employees, Premier Gallant, MLAs, mayors, and councillors. The Government of Canada stands ready to help the Province of New Brunswick. The Canadian Coast Guard has been deployed, and we are thankful for the protection it is providing on the water and in the air. I witnessed hundreds of local heroes at work this past weekend, and I have never been prouder to represent the people of New Brunswick here in this House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal could boast about the merits of a tax. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that the carbon tax is going to slow GDP growth and cost the economy \$10 billion, yet no one in the Liberal Party can tell us what impact it will have on the environment. This is an economic and environmental policy that does not hold water, not to mention that it will suck even more money out of taxpayers' pockets.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: Can he tell us how much this tax is going to cost Canadian families?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the former Harper government, our collaboration with the provinces is always respectful. That is why we are working with them to figure out how they are going to put a price on carbon pollution. We will be working on this with the provinces this fall so that the new measure is ready for implementation on January 1. We still have a lot of work to do before then, but I can say that we are going to take concrete action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while creating economic growth.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the reality: this government creates deficits without a plan for balancing the budget, and 80% of Canadian families are paying more taxes today than under the previous Conservative government.

The Liberals even cancelled the tax credit for public transit. Now, with the carbon tax, they are going to siphon off \$10 billion from the Canadian economy.

My question for the Prime Minister is simple. How much is this new Liberal carbon tax going to cost Canadian families?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are out in left field, as usual.

Oral Questions

We made a commitment to Canadians that we would help the middle class and, in the last election, Canadians had to choose between the Conservatives, who proposed austerity and cuts, or the Liberals, who proposed investing in the middle class.

Canadians made the right choice because we lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them for the wealthiest 1%. We cut business taxes. We provide the Canada child benefit, which helps nine out of 10 families and will lift hundreds of thousands of youth out of poverty.

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our millionaire trust fund Prime Minister has spent much of his life living in government-owned mansions. Now we learn that he actually has two mansions, one to prepare his meals, and another for him to eat them in. At the same time, he says that British Columbians, who are suffering under gasoline prices of \$1.60 a litre, need to make better choices. Does he not think it is a little hypocritical to charge more taxes to middle-class Canadians while he lives in the lap of luxury at their expense?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the Conservatives bring up British Columbia, because that is a jurisdiction that for almost 10 years has had a price on carbon pollution, which has led to concrete, positive outcomes in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and has created among the strongest growth across the country in the economy. That demonstration of taking real action on climate change, which is something they refused to do for 10 years and continue to refuse to do, is actually the way to create a strong economy and better opportunities for all Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, British Columbia is also the place with the highest gas prices, in part due to the existing carbon tax, a tax that the Prime Minister wants to further raise. He promised not to raise taxes on the middle class, and he promised openness by default. He has managed to break both of those promises with the carbon tax cover-up. Not only has he already raised income taxes on 80% of middle-class Canadians, he now wants to charge them a carbon tax and cover up how much it will cost them. Why does he not keep his promise, end the carbon tax cover-up, and finally give Canadians a break?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I will have enough time in 30 seconds to correct everything the hon. member got wrong, but let me start on one.

We lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%, which his party voted against.

We have made our commitment to invest in the middle class and people working hard to join it, and it has delivered the fastest growth in the G7 last year. It has led to the creation of 600,000 and more good jobs and the lowest unemployment in 40 years. Our plan is working. Their plan for austerity would not.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. They raised payroll taxes, which disproportionately target middle- and low-income people. They are imposing a carbon tax, which disproportionately targets middle- and low-income people.

They have taken away the transit tax credit, which has the effect of raising taxes on middle- and lower-income people who make the responsible and green decision to take transit.

They have raised taxes, and they have targeted those tax increases at those who can least afford to pay. With all these tax increases, why will he not just admit that he broke his promise to Canadian middle-class taxpayers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again there are so many things wrong with that list of statements, and again I am going to focus on just one, the promise we made to invest in the middle class and people working hard to join it. We lowered taxes for the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. We lowered small business taxes. We delivered a Canada child benefit that helps nine out of 10 families and is lifting hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty, and we are moving forward on delivering a Canada workers benefit that is going to help low-income workers actually remain in, and get into, the workforce.

These are the kinds of things we are doing to focus on the middle class.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as of December 31, 2020, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and the British Virgin Islands will have to publicly declare the identity of the owners of companies that are registered there.

That is what British MPs had the courage to vote in last Tuesday in an effort to increase transparency to combat tax havens. In the meantime, Canada talks the talk, but continues to sit on the sidelines watching the parade go by. In fact, Canada is at the back of the pack of the G20 when it comes to financial transparency.

Will the Prime Minister follow the U.K.'s example and tighten the rules on the registration of companies in Canada as the first step in combatting tax havens?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, knowing with certainty who owns what company will help us stop those who use corporations to evade taxes or launder money.

We have established a vast network of bilateral tax treaties and tax information exchange agreements with our international partners. We see eye to eye with the provinces and territories on the importance of knowing who owns what corporation. This agreement is the first major step in preventing the abusive use of corporations for tax evasion and other criminal activities.

Oral Questions

• (1425)

[English]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, is he kidding me? Canada is actually a laughingstock in the world on tax evasion. Why is that? It is because it is possible to register a corporation in Canada without disclosing the name of its owners or its administrators. While the Government of Canada seems satisfied with this lack of accountability, the British parliament is taking action for greater financial transparency in its overseas territories.

I challenge the Prime Minister to go from words to action. Enough with the banalities. Will the Prime Minister start tightening the rules regarding the registration of businesses in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that knowing clearly who owns which company will help us stop those who use corporations to evade taxes, launder money, finance terrorism, and trade in dangerous goods, like firearms. We have already developed an extensive network of bilateral tax treaties and tax information exchange agreements with international partners. We reached an agreement with provincial and territorial finance ministers to ensure we know who owns which corporation.

The agreement is an important first step that will help prevent companies from concealing ownership information in order to facilitate tax evasion, tax avoidance—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Essex.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the uncertainty that Canadians businesses and workers are feeling has reached a tipping point. We are now hearing from media leaks that NAFTA countries are aiming to sign an agreement in principle that focuses on the auto sector before the end of this month. However, rumours are not enough. Can anyone even tell us what an agreement in principle is?

People need to know that their jobs are safe. When will the Prime Minister tell Canadians when a fair deal will be reached, or will the Liberals continue with the same level of secrecy on trade agreements that we saw with the Conservatives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer the question from the member opposite on what an agreement in principle is. It is great to see the NDP members taking an interest in trade deals, because we know that trade is good for growing the economy.

When we actually move forward with an agreement in principle, it is because the broad strokes have been agreed to on the trade agreement and it means we will be able to move into the legal scrub, which is the next step to make sure that they all connect properly.

We are working very hard on signing and improving NAFTA. We are glad that the NDP is taking an interest.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat the question. Maybe the Prime Minister will understand it better this time.

Again this weekend, we learned that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is optimistic that we will be able to reach a satisfactory agreement with the United States on NAFTA.

Workers are living in uncertainty as a result of potential taxes on steel and aluminum. In spite of our repeated calls for transparency, the government has remained silent on this subject. Optimism is good. Results are even better.

When will the government show transparency and reassure communities with a permanent exemption on these taxes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with our NAFTA partners for months to improve and negotiate a new agreement that will be better for the workers of our three countries.

We know that workers, businesses, investors, and travellers need certainty, and that is exactly what we are working on.

We understand that this is a long process and that this American administration poses some challenges, but we are focused on what we have to do to defend the interests of Canada and businesses and to create economic growth in our three countries.

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*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister have any idea of the difficult choices most families already have to make when it comes to how they spend their money?

Let me give him an example of a family. Jacob has to be driven to soccer, Emma to piano, and then little Noah has a medical condition and has to be taken to the doctor, two hours away, once a week.

Can the Prime Minister tell parents like these just which child they are supposed to say no to in order to pay for his carbon tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that climate change is real and Canadians expect us to take strong action. That is exactly what we are doing.

For the sake of our children, I truly wish that climate change were not a partisan issue, but the Conservatives have clearly made it one.

We will continue to do what we have been doing for two years, taking practical, cost-effective measures to tackle climate change, to grow a clean economy, and to create good jobs. That is what Canadians expect and that is exactly what we are doing.

Oral Questions

•(1430)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling every day to make ends meet, and this Prime Minister has absolutely no idea of the struggle that they are facing.

While he gets his taxpayer-funded meals delivered to his taxpayer-funded home using taxpayer-funded fuel, he tells Canadians that they are supposed to make better choices.

Again I ask the Prime Minister if he can, from his ivory tower, please tell Canadians what better choices they are supposed to make to pay for his useless carbon tax.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us set the record straight: 80% of Canadians live in a jurisdiction that has a price on carbon pollution, and these four provinces had the best economic growth last year.

Our government is taking action by putting a price on carbon pollution to grow the economy in cleaner ways. The Harper Conservatives think it is easier to stay silent and do nothing on climate change. They continue to ignore science and the reality unfolding in their own backyards.

In 2015, Canadians asked for a change, and doing nothing on climate change, as the Conservatives did for 10 years, is not an option.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, by 2022, the Canadian economy will have taken a \$10-billion hit because of the carbon tax. This new sexist carbon tax's sole purpose is to pay down the Liberal deficit.

How much extra money will Canadian families have to shell out every year because of the Prime Minister's bad management?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians demanded action against climate change during the Harper government's decade-long rule.

We have taken action. We put a price on carbon to grow the economy in cleaner ways. That is helping us fight climate change, reduce emissions, put money in Canadians' pockets, and support middle-class jobs. Everyone knows that the opposition leader's refusal to come up with a plan proves that the Harper Conservatives still do not have a climate change plan.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, most Canadian seniors live on a fixed income. They plan ahead and they spend their money very carefully so that they can make ends meet. The Liberals' carbon tax is increasing the cost of gas, home heating, groceries, and the other basic essentials that form a large part of seniors' budgets. Seniors cannot afford the Prime Minister's ever-increasing taxes. Why is the Prime Minister targeting fixed- and low-income seniors with his carbon tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that we can fight climate change and

grow our economy at the same time. That is what our plan is doing, and it is working. Canada's emissions are dropping, while our economy grows. In the past two years, hard-working Canadians created nearly 600,000 new jobs. Unemployment rates are near the lowest levels in more than 40 years. Since 2016, Canada has led all G7 countries in economic growth.

Putting a price on pollution will make Canada's economy stronger over time, help create new economic opportunities, and help create good middle-class jobs.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has gone too far. He is forcing Canadians to make an impossible choice. Gas prices in B.C. are skyrocketing, making families choose between buying gas or paying for groceries. The Prime Minister says that is a good thing, that Canadians should drive less. He is punishing ordinary hard-working Canadians.

Will he finally tell us how much his carbon tax will cost the average Canadian family?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the four provinces pricing pollution—British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec—led the country in economic growth last year, showing that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. B.C. put a price on carbon pollution more than a decade ago. Since 2008, B.C.'s direct price on carbon has reduced emissions by 5% to 15%, according to experts at the University of Ottawa and Duke University. Meanwhile, provincial real GDP grew by more than 17% in the same period of time, demonstrating that action on climate change and economic growth are absolute imperatives that go together.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister listening? Why will he not answer?

His government is forcing Canadian families to choose between taking kids to hockey and paying their heating bills. We have seen the mess the Wynne Liberals have made in Ontario. Families are unable to both heat their homes and pay their mortgages. Single mothers, seniors, and Canadian families are all suffering. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister will not feel the impact of his tax hike. Why? He has a trust fund.

Why will he not tell us how much his carbon tax will cost the average Canadian family?

Oral Questions

• (1435)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament for British Columbia, my hon. colleague should know better. In British Columbia, we have had a price on carbon pollution since 2008 as a result of the leadership of Premier Campbell. The revenues associated with that were returned to families in the form of tax reductions and rebates. Low-income families in British Columbia were absolutely no worse off and we had a price on pollution, which incented good choices with respect to efficiency and growth, a clean economy, and the development of the most robust clean technology sector in all of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the *Ottawa Citizen* revealed the true story of a former Liberal Party strategist who was just hired as a lobbyist by Google, a Google department head who became chief of staff for the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and another former Liberal strategist, now the chief lobbyist for Facebook, who forgot to disclose his many meetings with the Minister of Finance.

Who said Ottawa was a boring city? This is like something out of *House of Cards*.

Could it be that the cozy relationship between web giants and the Liberals is holding the government back from forcing those companies to pay their fair share of taxes?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, the vast majority of Canadians use social media and digital platforms. Because of this, I met with representatives of all the major platforms to develop our cultural policy, Creative Canada.

My chief of staff's expertise and knowledge on the business model used by web giants is therefore an asset, given that our goal is to protect and promote our culture online. She has always been completely transparent about her former employer, including with the Ethics Commissioner.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada is warning that the power of the U.S. data oligarchies is so great that it is now threatening the competitiveness of the Canadian economy—this as the U.S. and the U.K. talk about regulating these corporate giants that have the power to undermine democratic elections. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party has put a “for sale” sign on the Prime Minister's door for all the data lobbyists who just all happen to have Liberal Party passes.

Once again, why is the government putting the interests of giant data and its Liberal Party insiders ahead of the interests of Canadian citizens, consumers, and Canadian culture?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear when it comes to data, data breaches, and privacy concerns to take aggressive action. That is why we put forward regulations to protect Canadians under the Personal Information Protection and

Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA. This applies to private entities. If there is any stolen or lost data, they must report that to the individual and to the Privacy Commissioner. Failure to do so will lead to an infraction with a fine of up to \$100,000. We have been very clear about taking action on this file and will continue to do so.

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[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 27, the Federal Court said that refugees could file a claim for refugee protection in Canada if they were worried about being deported from the United States. That is fundamentally contrary to the logic of the safe third country agreement, under which the United States complies with international refugee laws, including the non-refoulement principle.

Does the government agree with the Federal Court that the United States is not a safe country for asylum seekers or will it do what needs to be done and appeal that decision?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is some highly worrisome rhetoric coming from the Conservative benches. They are the ones perpetuating the myth that people are trying to jump the queue when they know very well that asylum seekers are treated completely differently from other asylum seekers.

They are the ones who floated the ridiculous idea of creating an official point of entry 9,000 kilometres long with fewer security officers. While they are busy fearmongering, we are going to ensure that Canadians are kept safe and that Canadian and international laws are—

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

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to see the minister so completely miss the point of the question I just asked him. It was very straightforward.

This morning the Minister of Immigration told Canadians that he had nothing new to offer in terms of how to deal with the thousands of illegal migrants. The Liberals never talk about the need for compassion for real refugees in UN camps. They never talk about compassion for people who immigrate to Canada legally and who now have to wait longer.

While the minister is moving heaven and earth to accommodate illegal migrants, thousands and thousands of refugees are suffering and forgotten in real refugee camps.

Can the government show some real leadership and put the issue of asylum seekers on the agenda for the G7 summit?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives may like to talk about security but they are the ones that slashed \$390 million from the Canada Border Services Agency budget. They claim to be full of compassion but they are the ones who took medical aid away from families and children who came to Canada as refugees. This hypocrisy and them pretending to care about refugees is completely false. Canadians need to know that.

[English]

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, truly vulnerable refugees in the world do not have the means to fly to the United States and sneak across the Canadian border. Many anguish in refugee camps, waiting in a 45,000-case private sponsorship backlog. They cannot jump the line, yet the Liberals are allowing others to do just that. How is that fair or compassionate?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harper Conservatives would not know what compassion is if it hit them in the face.

The Harper Conservatives cut \$400 million from border security operations, and they pretend to care about the border. The Harper Conservatives kept families apart, with spouses, live-in caregivers, children, and others in queues. We inherited a huge, ballooning backlog under the privately sponsored refugees.

The Conservatives have no idea what compassion is about. They did not care about the Yazidi refugees.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It is not helpful for order in this place to suggest that people are not honourable or lack compassion or are not competent. Of course, that goes both ways. I ask members to be cautious and careful in the words they use, and particularly the minister on this occasion. I would ask him not to use that kind of suggestion in the future.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has issued 12,500 expedited work permits for people who have entered Canada illegally from the United States in the last year alone. There are hundreds of thousands of people, including new Canadians, who are out of work or could be out of work and are trying to make ends meet. Planned orderly migration grows our economy. What is happening at the Quebec-U.S. border is not planned, orderly, fair, or compassionate.

Why will the Prime Minister not close the loophole in the safe third country agreement?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harper Conservatives never understood a very simple thing about immigration, that investment follows silence. They did not make the necessary investments in immigration processing.

Let us stick to the numbers. Under that party, parents and grandparents had to wait years to come to Canada. Spouses and children were kept apart for years under that party. Privately sponsored refugees were kept apart for years under that party. We

were handed a 50,000-case backlog in privately sponsored refugees. Yes, the Conservatives lack compassion because they cut refugee health care.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no fewer than three ministers held a press conference this morning on the issue of asylum seekers, but they really did not have anything new to tell us.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness announced that Canadian law will continue to be enforced and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said that he plans to go to Nigeria. However, there was nothing to address the root of the problem.

Will the government stop dithering and finally suspend the safe third country agreement?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did announce new measures this morning during our press conference.

Among other things, we have spoken to our American partners about the issue of asylum seekers arriving from Nigeria with a visa. This is an important file because this group represents the largest number of asylum seekers at this time. We also provided more information on the issue of the triage system set up to deal with those arriving at the Quebec border. We spoke about measures we are taking to examine the additional requests for funding from the Province of Quebec. We are doing all kinds of things at this time.

• (1445)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is a far cry from “all kinds of things”, because we have been talking about this since January 2017.

[English]

The government can send officials to the U.S. and to Nigeria. It can talk about all of the things that are happening, but the problem persists. What we are seeing is people who, in one case, are trying to flee death, torture, and poor living conditions, and in another case, fleeing anti-refugee sentiment that exists even in places like the White House.

If the government wants to be welcoming to refugees and it wants it to happen in the proper way at official border crossings, why does it not do the easy thing and suspend the safe third country agreement?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safe third country agreement is premised on the notion of better management of asylum seekers between Canada and the United States. It is based on a principle supported by the United Nations Refugee Agency, that refugees should claim asylum in the first safe country that they land in. The United Nations Refugee Agency monitors both Canada and the United States in terms of their compliance with the safe third country agreement.

I did not think I would live to see the day when the NDP would disagree with the United Nations.

HEALTH

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks Mental Health Awareness Week. It is an important moment to take collective action to reduce stigma and, above all, to encourage our friends and family to talk about it openly. Poor mental health and mental illness are more prevalent than many people think. In fact, one out of every three Canadians will have a mental illness in their lifetime.

My question is for the Minister of Health. What action is this government taking regarding mental health for Canadians?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from West Nova for his leadership on this file.

With regard to mental health, I am proud that our government has invested more than \$5 billion to ensure that as many as 500,000 young Canadians across the country will receive mental health services. Additionally, through budget 2018, we are also investing over \$19 million to support at-risk youth to ensure that they have more culturally appropriate programs.

Mental health affects us all. That is why during Mental Health Awareness Week I challenge everyone to help us continue to overcome stigma and get loud about what mental health means to them.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were caught selling access to the Prime Minister at \$1500-per-person events. In spite of that, they have been out-fundraised by the Conservative Party. Now they are trying to tip the electoral scales in their favour.

Under their new legislation, the Liberals are limiting the amount that political parties can spend of their own Canadian raised funds, but are allowing foreign funds to flow freely into Canada to influence our elections.

When will the Liberals do something to actually strengthen the integrity of our electoral system instead of trying to only benefit themselves?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-76 would actually protect the integrity of our electoral system. It would also help protect the personal and private information of Canadians, and it would encourage and help more Canadians to participate in the electoral system and to vote in elections. Beyond that, there are actually measures in Bill C-76 that would ensure that foreign money is not spent in Canadians' electoral system.

We would urge the Conservatives to support Bill C-76 and to help move forward with an even stronger electoral system for Canadians.

The Speaker: I remind hon. members that the time to speak is when they have the floor and not at other times. The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound would do well to heed what I just said and not be speaking while I am trying to point out we should not be interrupting around here.

Oral Questions

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think anyone is believing any of that. It turns out the Liberals actually want stricter ID rules for buying marijuana than they do to protect the integrity of our elections. Nearly one million erroneous voter information cards were mailed out during the 2015 election, but the Liberals want to use them as a proof of address.

Why do the Liberals want people to show ID to buy marijuana but not in order to vote?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives were warned by hundreds of experts that eliminating voter information cards and vouching would actually have a negative impact and reduce Canadians' participation in the election. In fact, after the election, Stats Canada made it very clear that about 170,000 Canadians did not get to vote because of those changes by the Conservatives.

We believe very strongly, as does Elections Canada, that the electoral system is stronger when more Canadians vote in elections, and we will continue to encourage exactly that.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians know that the Liberal Party and the Prime Minister have zero credibility when it comes to talking about electoral reform, since they broke a key election promise on electoral reform. Nevertheless, Bill C-76 contains some pretty bad ideas, such as doing away with photo identification in favour of just a voter card. During the last election, one million voter cards contained errors.

Why are they playing games with democracy?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are determined to increase Canadians' confidence and their participation in our democratic processes. This bill will make our elections more accessible, make the electoral process more secure and transparent, and ensure that political parties protect the privacy of Canadians. We look forward to working with all members for a more open and transparent system.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one million voter cards were inaccurate, and the government thinks it is a good idea to go in that direction? Come on. That makes no sense.

The other nonsensical measure the government is proposing involves allowing foreign funds to fill party coffers during Canadian elections. It is ridiculous. Canadian elections belong to Canadians.

Why are the Prime Minister and his government proposing measures that will allow foreigners to send millions of dollars to Canada?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the Conservatives were questioning why we would require Canadians to have ID cards to purchase marijuana. Let us be very clear that one of our focuses is not just in terms of legalizing but also to heavily regulate marijuana. We want to keep it out of the hands of young people. That is one of the reasons we are doing it.

We actually think it is a good thing for Canadians to vote but not necessarily a good thing for young Canadians to buy marijuana. Where are the Conservatives coming from on this?

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CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, Canada Post's profits surged a whopping 78%. Business is booming, so it is time to make investments that ensure healthy profits are there for the future. Postal workers' pensions must be fully supported, and pay equity issues must be settled. Now is the time to implement postal banking. Will the minister commit to supporting Canada Post, make the investments in the workforce, and expand services so it remains profitable for years in the future?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government put forth a new vision for Canada Post that puts service to Canadians first. We have implemented a new leadership model. We have a new chair of the board. Last Friday, we announced five appointments to the board of directors. We are encouraging innovation. We are encouraging creativity. We know that Canadians value Canada Post, and we will continue to let its leadership do its job and share our vision for a strong and forward-looking Canada Post.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of farmed salmon escaped once, and the state of Washington bans open net farms. In Canada, B.C. coastal first nations occupy two salmon farms for over 200 days, and the minister does nothing. On top of that, disgusting video footage shows virus-laden fish blood spewing into the wild salmon migration route and ancient glass sponges smothered by salmon farm waste, and he still does nothing. Finally, last week the environment commissioner issued a scathing report.

When will the minister stand up for wild salmon and transition this industry to safe, land-based closed containment?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that our government is committed to protecting Canada's aquatic ecosystems and fisheries through science-based decision-making. We welcome all the scientific reports, including one released today on the strategic salmon health initiative. All these scientific reports are informing the decisions our government is making with respect to protecting wild salmon and ecosystems, not only in British Columbia but right across the country, and we will continue to do everything necessary to ensure that this is the case.

● (1455)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently released court documents show that the Minister of Fisheries personally intervened in the Arctic surf clam process. In his own handwriting, scrawled across an official document, he ordered his officials to “take next steps with [Five Nations] and ensure that additional Indigenous communities are quickly confirmed.” This proves that the minister knew that Five Nations did not have the required indigenous partners, but he approved its bid anyway. Why?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government decided, as the previous Conservative government had, that it was important to bring a new entrant into this lucrative offshore fishery. We thought it was important to include indigenous communities in a historic access to this important offshore fishery. That is why our government retained a proposal that included indigenous communities from five provinces, four in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec, in a partnership with a business with experience in offshore fisheries, and we think this will bring economic benefits to indigenous people and Atlantic Canadians.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the same court documents reveal that Liberal-connected Premium Seafoods owns 75% of Five Nations Clam. The minister has said that this is all about providing the best economic value for the most people. If Edgar Samson, the brother of a Liberal MP, owns 75% of the benefits, where are they truly flowing?

Why is the minister putting people out of work in Grand Bank to line the pockets of his Liberal friends and family?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said a moment ago, the previous Conservative government actually omitted entirely including indigenous communities in access to this historic fishery. Our government did not make that mistake. Our government accepts that if five indigenous leaders work together with a non-indigenous business and come to an arrangement they have said publicly is fair and will benefit their communities, we listen to those indigenous leaders, something the previous government forgot to do.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fix was in. This minister gave millions of dollars' worth of fish quota to Liberal Party insiders. He claimed it was about reconciliation. How well did that work? He has the first nations taking him to court. This is an insult to reconciliation. He is pitting one first nation against another after a sham of a bidding process.

What will the indigenous services minister do to make sure that there is fairness for all bidders, not just party inside donors?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our decision to increase indigenous participation in fishing is consistent with our government's commitment to forging a renewed relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples. Enhancing access to the surf clam fishery broadens the distribution of benefits from this public resource and is a powerful step toward reconciliation, and we are very proud of that.

* * *

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new commissioner of the RCMP, Brenda Lucki, has started her role as the 24th commissioner of the RCMP. Most importantly, she will be the first woman to assume that role in a permanent capacity. Commissioner Lucki has been a Mountie for over 32 years, brings a wealth of experience to the job, and has worked throughout Canada and with the United Nations.

I would like to ask the Minister of Public Safety, what are his expectations and goals for our new commissioner?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Humber River—Black Creek for her long-standing advocacy for RCMP members who have faced harassment in the workplace.

As outlined in the mandate letter we released today, preventing harassment will be a major focus of the new commissioner, as will strengthening relationships with indigenous people and modernizing governance. Of course, priority number one is always public safety.

I look forward to commissioner Lucki's first appearance at a standing committee of the House of Commons later this afternoon.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, the Liberals signed an agreement with the Municipality of Meaford for the lease of the local harbour. It stated that the municipality was not responsible for major repairs. Well, after a major storm caused damage, the Liberals told the municipality that it is on the hook for the cost of repairs. In a letter, all DFO can say is, "We are unable to come to an agreement with the town." However, it did agree on an arrangement two years ago.

When will the minister do the right thing, honour the agreement, and pay for the repairs at the Meaford Harbour?

• (1500)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for the question. I had the opportunity to discuss this very matter with him when I was before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. As all colleagues know, small craft harbour infrastructure is extremely important to our government.

I have taken note of my colleague's concerns. I hope in the coming weeks to have some very good news for that hon. member and that important community.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned that VIA Rail will soon be issuing a call for tenders to renew its fleet on the Quebec-Windsor corridor. That is good news on the surface.

However, despite this \$1.5-billion investment of public money, the government does not plan to make job creation here at home a requirement for the successful bidder. While many countries make public transit contracts conditional on local spinoffs, this government is asking for nothing.

The question is simple and rather obvious. Does the minister plan to require local spinoffs for a contract worth \$1.5 billion of public money?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is equally simple.

We have obligations we have to meet at the federal level when we have federal contracts to procure new equipment. First there is NAFTA, and then our obligations to the World Trade Organization.

When we issue a request for a project, we are not allowed to specify factors such as a certain percentage in Canada and a certain percentage of jobs. It is not allowed—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

* * *

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. It is an opportunity to raise awareness among employers, employees, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of preventing workplace injuries and illnesses. Every day, in my riding and across the country, Canadians go to work and obviously hope they will return home safe and sound.

Oral Questions

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour tell us what our government is doing to help prevent workplace injuries and illnesses?

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his question and his continued commitment to Canadian workers. Our government takes the health and safety of Canadian workers very seriously. We have strengthened the Canada Labour Code to bring worker protection in line with current realities. We introduced Bill C-65, putting an end to harassment and violence in federally regulated workplaces, and we amended asbestos standards so that Canadians are not exposed at work.

This year's theme for North American Occupational Safety and Health Week is "Making Safety a Habit". As Canadians, let us do our part and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the Prime Minister. He gave his word in Quebec City last January. The Coast Guard fleet is aging. The ferries are getting stuck in the ice. The Saguenay's economy is in jeopardy because of the Liberals' inaction.

When will the Prime Minister award the four icebreakers to Davie, including the polar class *Aiviq*?

When will the Prime Minister stop ignoring the people of Saguenay, who need a navigable waterway, and I emphasize navigable, and keep his word?

Hon. Carla Quattrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we of course recognize the expertise of Davie workers. The Coast Guard has requirements for the icebreakers and we are continuing our discussions with Davie to meet them. I obviously cannot negotiate in the House, but I can assure my colleagues that we are continuing our efforts, which are very genuine.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, to hear Liberal ministers tell it this morning, protecting our borders is one of this government's top priorities.

Can the minister tell us how his trip to Nigeria will address the problem of Honduran and Salvadoran asylum seekers coming in from the United States?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our work in the United States with the Central American diaspora, whose members are not claiming asylum in Canada. That is because a number of our colleagues and consulates in the United States have worked hard to help them

understand that there are rules governing asylum seekers' entry into Canada. We are doing our job on that front, and we have no asylum seekers from Central America.

• (1505)

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness announced the construction of new facilities in Lacolle to alleviate the current pressure on Quebec's resources.

We understand that Ottawa is expecting the arrival of large numbers of irregular refugee claimants. The government's solution is to build a temporary village until these people end up settling permanently in Montreal. None of the measures announced this morning do anything to solve the problem.

When will the government come up with a real plan to ensure respect for our borders and keep them secure, particularly in Quebec?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have described the measures that we have taken to date and the new measures that we are implementing.

My colleague's reference to a refugee camp at the Lacolle border crossing is quite frankly ridiculous. It is not only ridiculous, but it is also dangerous and irresponsible to make those kind of statements here in the House.

It is a temporary camp in case there are a lot more asylum seekers. If we did not set up this camp, Canadians would think that we are irresponsible. We are taking the necessary measures to be prepared for every eventuality, even though we are working on decreasing the number of asylum seekers in Canada.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indigenous Services. Last year, an INAN committee report, titled "Breaking Point: The Suicide Crisis in Indigenous Communities", made several recommendations. One recommendation was that the government increase infrastructure funding to address mental health and substance abuse issues.

Tragically, my riding has the highest suicide rate in Canada, yet there is not one federally funded addictions and mental health facility in the entire territory. Will the minister help alleviate this crisis and commit funding for mental health and addictions facilities in Nunavut?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Nunavut knows, our government has made unprecedented investments in mental wellness and addictions treatment for indigenous peoples. In the case of Nunavut, this includes \$7.7 million last year in Nunavut for mental wellness and addictions. We have heard the call for a treatment facility in the territory, and we have funded a feasibility study to that end. We look forward to those results and to moving forward on this work.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, you rose and admonished the Minister of Immigration for using derogatory insults towards the Conservatives. I was shocked when the Minister of Immigration rose immediately thereafter and challenged your opinion and did not heed your ruling and instead doubled down and hurled the same insult in this House.

When you make a ruling, it is to be respected. It is to be listened to. I think the Minister of Immigration, and all Liberals who are now yelling and heckling, should heed your rulings when you make them.

The Speaker: Order. I thank the hon. opposition House leader for her suggestion that all members should heed rulings of the Speaker.

There is often derogatory language said in all directions, and I must admit that there was no direct personal attack in this case. Those attacks are generally unparliamentary. I talked about what is helpful to order, so there is a difference, and it is not nearly as serious. However, I would prefer that members remain cautious. As I said, if derogatory language toward a party were not allowed, an awful lot of questions and answers would not be permitted. There is in fact an important distinction to make between those things, so I would ask members to heed what is said. I would not call that a ruling in this case; it is more a request of members. As I said, I would ask that members try to be careful in their language use in the future.

• (1510)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for that clarification. However, I would like to point out that after you made the clarification, the Minister of Immigration specifically got up and repeated the same thing that you asked him not to. I realize that there are frequent times when you are giving us feedback on this side, but it seems that the minister has an opportunity to apologize to the House. We have already risen on a point of order with regard to his decorum last week, and I would ask that he apologize here today.

The Speaker: To the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, my difficulty here is that it is not actually unparliamentary language. If it were unparliamentary language, I would have had a very different response to what the minister then said. This is a different matter than what I think the member is talking about.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, for weeks now, several cabinet ministers have been answering our questions by claiming

Routine Proceedings

that the Conservative government cut \$300 million from border services. I have a document here that proves the exact opposite. From 2012 to 2015, we increased the agency's budget by \$300 million, whereas they have cut \$300 million in the past two and a half to three years. I ask for unanimous consent to table a Library of Parliament document specifically stating this information.

The Speaker: Does the member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

RIDING NAME CHANGE ACT, 2018

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-402, An Act to change the name of certain electoral districts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a honour for me to rise today to introduce a bill entitled An Act to change the name of certain electoral districts.

As its title suggests, this bill would change the names of 16 electoral districts across Canada. These changes are intended to better reflect the geographic reality of each electoral district.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank not only my colleagues in government, but also my colleagues in the opposition for their input on this file. Thanks to their contributions, everyone's contributions, this bill stands as a great example of collaboration between the different political parties represented in the House.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I suspect if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-402, an act to change the name of certain electoral districts, be deemed read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill deemed read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions signed by hundreds of residents of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who are terribly disturbed by the Canada summer jobs attestation program and feel that their charter rights are violated.

[*Translation*]

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even though the Liberal government broke its promise to Canadians on electoral reform, a number of my constituents in Hochelaga continue to fight to make sure that every vote counts.

I rise today to present a petition calling on the House to recognize that, in a democracy, every vote should count, and that our current voting system enables a party that receives less than 40% of the votes to get 100% of the power. The petitioners are calling on the government to implement a proportional voting system to ensure that the Parliament of Canada truly reflects voters' wishes.

• (1515)

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table in the House a petition signed by my constituents in Jonquière regarding automatic registration for the guaranteed income supplement.

The federal government recently announced it was launching a process to automatically register seniors for the guaranteed income supplement, but this process will not apply to everyone who is eligible upon reaching the age of 64. This program is important to all of our seniors, including those in my riding of Jonquière. A number of them need additional care. This supplement helps them stay at home, live decently, and have access to the care they need. This is why I am tabling a petition in the House regarding automatic registration for the guaranteed income supplement.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions, the first in regard to protecting the Thames River.

The Conservative government stripped away environmental protections in the Navigable Waters Protection Act, leaving hundreds of rivers, including the Thames, unprotected. The Liberal government has promised to bring back environmental protection, but it has failed to do so.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to support my private member's bill, Bill C-355, to convince the government to

prioritize the protection of the Thames River by amending the Navigation Protection Act, and, of course, this would apply to all rivers and lakes.

POSTAL BANKING

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is in regard to postal banking.

Nearly two million Canadians desperately need an alternative to payday lenders that prey upon people in our communities, the marginalized, rural, and indigenous communities of Canada.

We have 3,800 Canada Post outlets. They are already there. They could take their place in neighbourhoods where there are fewer and fewer banks and credit unions. Canada Post has a remarkable infrastructure, and this could be a rapid transition.

These petitions are calling on the Government of Canada to enact my motion M-166 to create a committee to study and propose a plan for postal banking under Canada Post Corporation.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition today from members of my constituency of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The petitioners seek to remind the House of Commons that violence against women continues to be a critical problem across Canada, disproportionately affecting the lives of indigenous women. The petitioners are urging this House to move towards full inclusion of women in society through pay equity and through supporting positions for women in leadership throughout Canadian society.

The petitioners call for full and equal rights for the women of Canada.

VISION CARE

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, shockingly, vision loss is expected to double in Canada over the next 20 years.

Petitioners from Nanaimo, Surrey, and Delta urge the government to invest in combatting the underlying factors that lead to vision loss. Specifically, the petitioners call on the government to develop a national framework for action to promote eye health and vision care, which will benefit all Canadians through the reduction of vision impairment resulting from preventable conditions, such as diabetes, and modification of known risk factors.

[*Translation*]

FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of one of my constituents, Anna Tölgyesi, a young leader in the Franco-Yukon and Franco-Canadian community and president of the Franco-Yukon youth association.

Routine Proceedings

Anna is a Grade 11 student at the Académie Parhélie. As part of her social studies class with Mr. Gillis, she and her classmates are watching this petition being tabled today. The petition is signed by 30 people and recognizes that:

Canada's francophone minority youth need post-secondary education options in their language in order to succeed, promote the language and maintain their francophone pride;

French-language post-secondary education plays an important role in minority communities and in their identities by ensuring youth from francophone communities can depend on a genuine continuum of education in French, from early childhood to the post-secondary level;

Distance, the lack of courses and programs, and linguistic insecurity are barriers that can prevent students from continuing their post-secondary studies in French; and

There is no francophone university west of Manitoba.

For all of these reasons, the signatories call upon Parliament to develop a national plan to increase the number of post-secondary institutions, programs and courses in francophone minority communities, especially in western Canada.

• (1520)

The Speaker: I must remind members who are presenting petitions to refrain from reading out the whole petition, especially if it is long and has multiple paragraphs. They can only summarize it for the House. Furthermore, members must not provide their views on the petition, which the hon. member did not do.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if a supplementary response to Question No. 1568, originally tabled on May 4, 2018, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1584 to 1594 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, furthermore, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 1568—**Mr. Martin Shields:**

With regard to any contracts over \$10,000 entered into by the government since January 1, 2016, but which were not disclosed on proactive disclosure: what are the details of all such contracts including (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services provided, (v) file number, (vi) reason why contract was not listed on the relevant proactive disclosure website?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1584—**Mr. Peter Julian:**

With regard to the Connecting Canadians Program: (a) which regional development agencies and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada programs related to regional economic development were consulted in the development of the program; (b) if any agencies or programs were not consulted, why was this the case; (c) how much has been allocated to the program since 2015-16, broken down by region and fiscal year; (d) how much has been spent on the

program since 2015-16, broken down by region and fiscal year; (e) how many previously unconnected people, broken down by region and year, have been connected to high-speed Internet per the program's definitions since it was launched, broken down by year and region; and (f) for each approved project, which communities were intended to be served?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1585—**Mrs. Kelly Block:**

With regard to the various receptions held by or funded by the government, including the Canadian High Commission, in India during the Prime Minister's trip in February 2018: (a) what were the dates and locations of each reception; and (b) for each reception in (a), what was the total (i) food catering costs, including set up and labour, (ii) beverage or alcohol costs, including set up and labour, (iii) other costs, including a breakdown of each?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1586—**Mr. Erin O'Toole:**

With regard to expenditures in relation to the Canadian delegation to Davos, Switzerland, in January 2018, and based on invoices, contracts, or receipts received to date: (a) what is the total of all such expenditures; and (b) what are the details for each expenditure, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) description of goods or services provided, (iv) file number, (v) date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1587—**Mr. Erin O'Toole:**

With regard to government expenditures, since December 1, 2017, for all vendors with a mailing address in Switzerland: what are the details of all such expenditures, including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of goods or services provided, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1588—**Mr. Guy Lauzon:**

With regard to the statement by the Prime Minister on March 15, 2018, that "Dr. Boyer was recommended by the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments": how does the government reconcile this statement with the fact that, as of the date of the appointment, all of the positions for provincial or territorial members of the Advisory Board were vacant, according to the board's website?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1589—**Mr. Guy Lauzon:**

With regard to the state visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians: (a) who was responsible for making the arrangements for Their Majesties' arrival ceremony at Rideau Hall; (b) who ordered the German flags for use on the grounds of Rideau Hall for the arrival ceremony; (c) who was responsible for placing the German flags on site; (d) did the government apologize to the Government of Belgium for this incident; and (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, what are the details, including (i) who made the apology, (ii) to whom was it given, (iii) when was it given, (iv) what was the manner of the apology (e.g. formal letter, verbal)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1590—**Mr. Guy Lauzon:**

With regard to expenditures on paper calendars by the government, since November 4, 2015, and broken down by department, agency or other government entity: what is the total amount spent on paper calendars, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

S.O. 52

Question No. 1591—Mr. Guy Lauzon:

With regard to Statistics Canada and specifically the incident described in the March 11, 2018, CBC story, where 587 long-form census forms were stored in the trunk of an employee's vehicle that was stolen on a weekend trip to Montreal: (a) were the completed census forms ever recovered and, if so, when; (b) were the individuals whose information was stolen notified about the incident and, if so, when and how; (c) did the Statistics Canada employee who left the forms in his trunk violate any government policies or procedures and, if so, which ones; and (d) what specific changes have been made to the manner in which census information is stored as a result of this incident?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1592—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regards to the 2016 Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) changes: (a) since July 2016, how many single seniors have received the full \$947 annually, broken down by years and province; (b) since July 2016, how many single seniors have received a top up due to the 2016 changes, broken down by years and province; (c) what was the median increase for a top up in the GIS due to the 2016 changes, broken down by years and province; (d) how many single seniors are below the \$8,400 income threshold, broken down by years and province; (e) how many seniors living in an economic family are below the \$8,400 income threshold, broken down by years and province; (f) what is the average top up due to the 2016 changes, broken down by year and province; (g) has the government achieved its goal of improving the financial security of about 900,000 single seniors; (h) how has the government arrived at the numbers indicating that changes to the GIS will reduce poverty rates; (i) are seniors becoming low income at much faster rate than the rest of the population; (j) how many Canadian seniors have lived in poverty since 2016; (k) how many full-time employees (FTE) are working on the Seniors Price Index; and (l) has the government looked at any other method than the consumer price index to calculate the GIS and, in the affirmative, which method?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1593— Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to automatic enrollment for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS): (a) were all local Service Canada employees sent a memo regarding the automatic enrollment; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what were the details of the memo; (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, why not; (d) what instructions and training did Service Canada employees receive in the months leading up to the automatic roll out of the GIS; (e) as of January 2018, how many new seniors are eligible to access (i) Old Age Security (OAS), (ii) GIS; (f) of those new eligible seniors in (e), how many were automatically enrolled and what are the reasons others who are eligible were not enrolled; (g) as of January 2018, how many letters have been sent out to seniors indicating they will automatically receive (i) OAS, (ii) GIS; (h) how many seniors automatically received their (i) OAS, (ii) GIS; (i) as of January 2018, how many seniors had to manually apply to (i) OAS, (ii) GIS; (j) what were the reasons for those seniors to manually apply to (i) OAS, (ii) GIS; (k) how many eligible seniors in Canada are not enrolled in (i) OAS, (ii) GIS; (l) has the government identified the reasons for this gap in (k); (m) is the automatic enrollment expected to reduce this and by what percentage point; (n) will the government automatically enroll all seniors currently eligible for the GIS and, in the affirmative, (i) what is the timeline for implementing this, (ii) how many seniors were not aware of their eligibility to the GIS program in 2017; (o) is the automatic enrollment in function of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) information; (p) is this in correlation the previous year's income; (q) will filling income tax be necessary to be a recipient of automatic enrollment process; (r) if any, what are the exemptions, broken down by (i) health reasons, (ii) others; (s) how many seniors are expected to not be automatic enrolled due to missing CRA information; and (t) are there any identified groups of people that will be impacted due to their missing CRA information and, in the affirmative, how will Employment and Social Development Canada address this?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1594— Mr. Ed Fast:

With regard to the Speaker's ruling of March 20, 2018, that "There is no question that the work of Members of Parliament is made more difficult without expeditious access to legislative information. Given this reality, there is a rightful expectation that those responsible for the information should do their utmost to ensure Members access to it. Not respecting this expectation does a disservice to all. It is particularly disconcerting when the Government gives priority to the media over the Members of

Parliament." What measures have been taken by the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office to comply with the Speaker's admonition in his ruling?

(Return tabled)

* * *

[English]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

USE OF TREASURY BOARD VOTE 40

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today in accordance with Standing Order 52(2) to propose an emergency debate on the use of a central vote, in this case Treasury Board vote 40 in the main estimates 2018-19 to fund all new budget initiatives. If I could, I would just like to take a brief moment to explain the timing of this request and the importance of the debate, not just to parliamentarians but also to you, Mr. Speaker.

On the timing, the new central vote, vote 40, was proposed in the main estimates. However, we just learned a little more about it on Thursday with the minister at committee. Specifically what we learned was that he is already contemplating making changes to the form of the Appropriation Act foreseen in main estimates 2018-19. We are not exactly sure what form that is going to take.

We have learned that the minister has not committed to consulting opposition parties prior to making that change. We have also learned that he does not intend to move for a take-note debate in this House so that Parliament has the opportunity to discuss this fully prior to the tabling of the appropriations bill.

The importance of that for parliamentarians is that there is no mechanism prior to dispensing with the main estimates in committee of the whole to be able to have a full parliamentary debate. The minister, of course, mentioned opposition days and other mechanisms, but there is no routine way for that legislation to come before the House. It is a very significant change, so I think it is important that parliamentarians have the opportunity to weigh in before decisions are taken and before they are asked to grant that authority.

It is important for you, Mr. Speaker, because if the wording of that bill is not sufficient, it may create a situation where you are being asked to rule under very short time constraints. You would benefit from hearing the various point of views, both from government and the opposition parties, about the relative merits of this new mechanism so you have time to contemplate how it would work.

Speaker's Ruling

There are also other matters having to do with the central vote that may come to your attention in the next little while, having to do with how funding all these new budget initiatives out of one central vote affects the existing procedure for studying main estimates. Normally, proposals are brought to subject expert committees through departmental estimates. Under the new process, all these things seem to perhaps have to be studied at the government operations committee under Treasury Board. As committees start to figure out that they may not be able to study new budget initiatives in the normal way, those procedural issues may well be brought to your attention.

It is urgent that you have the opportunity to be able to hear what is on the mind of parliamentarians with respect to this new mechanism so you can prepare to make rulings on the consequences of this new mechanism for parliamentary procedure.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for explaining his request for an emergency debate. However, I do not find that it meets the strict requirements of the standing order.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-75—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 17, 2018 by the hon. member for Niagara Falls concerning the alleged premature disclosure of the contents of Bill C-75, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other acts and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

• (1525)

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Niagara Falls for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for their submissions.

[English]

The member for Niagara Falls explained that an article by the CBC was published online eight minutes after Bill C-75 was introduced, suggesting that the only way this timeline was feasible was if the news organization was given advanced access to the contents of the bill.

Underscoring the importance of the House's right of first access to bills, the member contended that it is unacceptable that members have to “play catch-up” on a public debate on government legislation that is occurring between a well-briefed media and the Minister of Justice.

[Translation]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons told the House that no advance disclosure of the bill had occurred and the government had complied with all the rules. As a result, he believed that members were not impeded in

their functions, nor was there any offence against the authority of the House.

Let me begin by noting that in this case, the right of members to be informed first as to the content of bills which are on notice is not in question. Rather, what is at issue is whether this customary privilege has been properly observed.

[English]

On June 8, 2017, I explained that the right of first access has to be balanced with other considerations, such as the complex policy development process that accompanies the drafting of a piece of legislation. I stated at page 12334 of the *Debates*:

The right of the House to first access to legislation is one of our oldest conventions. It does and must, however, coexist with the need of governments to consult widely, with the public and stakeholders alike, on issues and policies in the preparation of legislation.

This, then, must be measured against other evidence that is provided to the Chair; in other words, is there irrefutable evidence that specific legislative details about Bill C-75, beyond what could be considered as consultative information, were purposely and prematurely divulged to the media? Weighing the evidence provided in this case, as troubling as it is, it is difficult for the Chair to draw that conclusion, particularly since some details of the article in question could have come from the summary of the bill or from background information from discussions during the consultation process.

[Translation]

For that same reason, I can only agree with my predecessor when he noted on April 18, 2013, at page 15610 of the *Debates*, when referring to a question of privilege raised in relation to the premature disclosure of government legislation:

...it is a well-established practice that the contents of a bill are kept confidential until introduced in Parliament, thus making their premature disclosure a serious matter. However, in this case, a careful reading of the arguments presented to the Chair about what transpired reveals that the concerns expressed appear to be based more on conjecture and supposition than on actual evidence.

[English]

In addition, the parliamentary secretary assured the House that the government had not, in any way, divulged the contents of the bill nor its details before its introduction in the House. Therefore, although, as I said, this is very troubling, I cannot find that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege in this matter.

While the evidence presented may not be irrefutable in this instance, the Chair remains concerned that some members, of course, were left with the impression that they were put at a disadvantage in their ability to fulfill their duties.

When new ways, through technology or otherwise, are found to share information, it remains incumbent upon those who are responsible for legislative information to respect the primacy of Parliament by respecting the right of the House to first access. Members should never have to even so much as wonder if they were not the first to receive legislative information.

Government Orders

● (1530)

[Translation]

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill C-65. I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

At the outset, I would like to say that the opposition party is in agreement with the bill, the harassment act for federally regulated workplaces, including this parliamentary precinct and indeed Parliament Hill. Several amendments were made at committee, and I will be speaking to those amendments specifically.

There are current critical movements and campaigns to empower victims of harassment, and those campaigns very sincerely reminded the world that harassment is intolerable in any circumstance.

Canada's Conservatives are proud to support Bill C-65 as it comes to the House at report stage, with our proposed amendments to ensure that complaints of harassment are dealt with in a non-partisan and timely manner. I will outline some of those amendments in a few minutes.

As representatives and leaders for Canada, it is our job to be proactive in our approach to standing against workplace harassment. I speak for myself and for members on this side of the House when I say that it is something we take very seriously within our own workplaces, because we are employers. We are employers of parliamentary staff who work not just in our Hill offices, but in our constituency offices. It is very important for us to set an example, and I believe Bill C-65 sets that example and sets a standard that all employers should follow with respect to federally regulated workplaces.

The bill focuses on three areas: preventing workplace harassment, responding to it, and supporting those who feel they have been harassed. There has been a tremendous amount of support shown for victims of harassment and bullying.

Bill C-65 went to committee, and there was a tremendous amount of work done by the committee. From speaking to our members, I know there were some issues with the bill as it came to committee, but all committee members came together to propose amendments to the bill that put a little more meat on it, considering some of the concerns that were first introduced.

I will read a quote from Manon Poirier, of the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Canada. At committee, she said:

Bullying, harassment, and sexual violence have no place in today's workplace, yet according to a survey conducted for the federal government, 10% of respondents said that harassment is common in the workplace, and 44% said that while it is not frequent, it happens. Most respondents agreed that incidents are under-reported and often dealt with ineffectively.

According to a report of the Human Resources Professionals Association, one third of women and over 10% of men have been sexually harassed at work. I think all members of the House would agree that this statistic is unacceptable and cannot stand to reflect the future of Canadian workplaces. It is our intent to create and set that example.

The Conservative Party introduced an amendment to avoid political interference in political offices during harassment investigations. That was a very important amendment that was put forward to make the investigation into harassment allegations free of political interference and political influence. That is one thing that I think all members would agree was very good in terms of the amendments that were proposed. It is also important that investigations not be seen to be intertwined with the perception of political interference.

● (1535)

The amendment transferred from the Minister of Labour to the deputy minister, a non-partisan civil servant, investigations involving the offices of members of Parliament. Again, this will preserve the integrity of the investigation process.

Another amendment ensures that strict timelines for investigations into incidents of harassment are in place to ensure investigations are carried out in a timely manner. Our committee team introduced and supported mandatory sexual harassment training as an essential part of the bill. I know several members of the House have already participated and have been engaged in the sexual harassment training. I know my mandatory session is coming up, and I look forward to participating in that.

At committee, Greg Phillips, the president of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees, summed up the importance of supporting not only those who had been harassed, but also their colleagues. He stated:

... the colleagues of an employee who receives a minimal resolution are less likely to come forward with their own cases of harassment. When someone sees a very minor penalty being implemented against the employer in a harassment complaint, nobody is going to want to file a harassment complaint... That workplace then becomes a toxic environment where nobody wants to work, and if they're working on something fundamental to the government, the most qualified employees aren't going to want to go there.

That is a very important point. It is very important that those who are dealing with issues of workplace harassment, sexual or otherwise, have their voices heard. Certainly, those situations are taken seriously by the members and by the House.

As the opposition deputy whip, I and the hon. member for Milton, whose birthday it is today, have been part of the subcommittee that has worked to ensure the code of conduct for the members of the House of Commons addresses complaints of sexual harassment. We have been working very closely. I am not in a position to discuss the details of our work because we are in the draft stage of the report, but it is very important work. It is work that has dovetailed the work of the PROC committee on harassment in the workplace among members.

Government Orders

The discussions at committee have progressed very well. All members have acted accordingly, with an understanding of the importance of this issue, with member-on-member complaints. I think the House, once the report comes, will be very pleased, because it was a consensus-building approach to the recommendations of this report. The expectation is that the report will be coming out very soon.

The House staff who were involved in that, namely Mr. Parent and Mr. Dufresne, were instrumental in ensuring that we, as members of the committee, were effective in our mandate from PROC in dealing with that committee.

Sexual misconduct and sexual harassment have no place in Canadian society, especially within our political system if we are to provide an example. From the experience of serving the residents of my riding as a ward and city councillor, I understand that safe workplaces entail freedom from all forms of harassment. As a proud parent of four, my hope is that their workplace is as committed to preventing and addressing harassment as the House is today. Harassment is an issue that may evolve again, considering that cyber-bullying, for example, is so prevalent within our society. As such, Conservative committee members also introduced and supported a mandatory review every five years.

I appreciate the work that was done at committee by not just members on our side, but on all sides, who came together to support Bill C-65. Combatting harassment is a pressing need in Parliament. Parliament and political leaders need to set the example, need to be the high bar for safe workplaces across Canada. Let Parliament Hill be the standard by which we will measure success in stopping all forms of harassment and creating a climate of respect for all.

We want to ensure that governments today and in the future focus on supporting victims as we have pledged to do. As a father, an elected official, and an employer, it is my responsibility to lead by example and to instill the qualities of a harassment-free workplace.

• (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to share a story with the member about a conversation I had with a constituent of mine last Saturday at McDonald's. She talked about how nice it was to see Parliament moving so quickly on this issue and that there had been a high sense of co-operation. In that discussion, we talked about education and how important it was with respect to dealing with issues like harassment. One of the topics focused on how important it was for Ottawa to not only work with different stakeholders but to work with school divisions in particular. We talked about this being a possible way to ensure that our young people benefited through education so we could prevent harassment going forward.

I would be interested in my colleague's comments on the importance of education and combatting harassment.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member does spend a lot of time at McDonald's on Saturdays, talking to his constituents, and I am sure having a lot of McCafé coffee.

We have seen a heightened awareness of the issue of sexual harassment over the last six to nine months, certainly in Hollywood

with respect to various celebrities and others as well. Quite a bit of education goes on in the school system in the city of Barrie. In fact, there are safe spaces for students who are part of the LGBTQ community. Therefore, we are getting to the point right now where we are educating young people on the areas of harassment, sexual or otherwise, and bullying, and we are seeing a general sense of intolerance toward it.

We have seen such things as the pink shirt campaign, for example, based on the unfortunate circumstances that happened in Nova Scotia. This has really become prevalent. Canadians are coming to their senses and certainly understanding that harassment in all forms is unacceptable.

I am glad to see that in my city, the Simcoe County District School Board has placed a significant emphasis on teaching young people that all forms of harassment are unacceptable.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the government for moving this legislation forward. I understand that at committee there was a common cause between New Democrat and Conservative representatives in urging the government to ensure that psychological harassment was specifically included in the bill and that mental health considerations were urged by the members of the Teamsters who came to testify at committee. The labour movement has a very large capacity and a big body of experience with respect to this.

I would like to hear from my colleague the extent to which he is satisfied that the amendments proposed at committee to include mental health protection and psychological harassment are in the final bill we are debating.

• (1545)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, certainly the issue of mental health and the psychological effects of harassment are significant issues. As a former president of the firefighters union in my local municipality, we pushed the municipality to better understand the impacts on mental health and the psychological effects. More important, it was to provide that harassment-free workplace. That is not to say there were not issues of harassment, there certainly were. At the time, the victims of the harassment could come forward and feel like they were being dealt with in a proper manner.

However, it speaks generally to the issue of mental health across the country. I am of the personal belief that mental health needs to be treated as equally as physical health and the effects it has in all aspects. In Ontario, we know that 10% of the health care cases are mental health cases, yet only receives 7% of the funding, for example. Therefore, much more can be done with respect to mental and psychological health.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, when the bill was last read in the House of Commons, I spoke very strongly in favour of it, with some suggestions for committee to look at. It is very important for us to have a framework by which we combat harassment. It is certainly a pressing need in Parliament.

Government Orders

I continue to take that position. For members in this place, I would like to offer some thoughts on how the bill could continue to be improved. For colleagues in the other place, should the bill be passed there, perhaps its committee could look at these.

This is a difficult topic to talk about, but the whole concept of what happens with a vexatious complaint is not adequately dealt with in the bill. Many private sector companies or organizations that the bill would not cover will have policies on disciplinary action if somebody makes a complaint and it is found to be vexatious. This is a very difficult conversation to have because I in no way want to make it seem as though people who make complaints through this process do so for anything other than to protect their rights.

However, given the atmosphere that we work in, and there is a political element to this, in order to protect people and encourage people to stand up for their rights, there also has to be a framework in which people understand the gravity of making such a complaint, especially if they do it for vexatious purposes. There is nothing in the bill right now that talks about what happens should a complaint be found to be vexatious, and that concerns me. It is also difficult to train people on what that means if we have not discussed that at the committee stage.

I am trying to present this concept in a way that acknowledges that oftentimes when victims report sexual harassment, they will be accused of making it as a vexatious complaint. It is this double-edged sword that I do not think we have quite gotten right. Indeed, we have seen incidences recently of colleagues who have cases litigated in the media and that concerns me. It concerns me for people who might say they do not want to get involved in this because they do not want to have to go through the process, that it seems away too stressful. I also am concerned about colleagues, of all political stripes, who perhaps are being targeted unjustly. I do not think that is yet in the bill and I hope that either this place or the other place considers that as we go forward.

The other thing I am not clear on, even with the amendments, is what defines “consent” in this situation. The bill talks about the definitions of “harassment” and “violence”, but it does not really address what consensual activity is, especially when it comes to sexual activity, in the context of our workplace. That lack of a definition will make it difficult for trainers to say that these are situations the code suggests are improper and these are situations by which they can make the situation proper.

Again, I want to qualify my comments by saying I am in no way, in any shape or form, saying that harassment should be tolerated in any situation. However, in my training, I found that the situations that were given based on this definition were very vague and subjective and could be interpreted differently based on different cultural backgrounds or if people had worked in different workplaces.

This is the beauty of the House of Commons. We do have different backgrounds and situations here, and that diversity should reflect better legislation. However, especially given that if I am speaking specifically to Parliament, our workplace turns over, at a minimum, every four years. Therefore, if we do not have a framework that talks about consent, it will be very difficult, both for investigators and for trainers, to have a quantitative, definable way to

discern what is appropriate and what is not appropriate behaviour in here. I wonder if that notion could have been expanded a bit more in the bill. I know it is difficult, but is worth talking about that.

● (1550)

The other thing that I wanted to mention was that we talk about harassment and the bill talks about punishment for that, but it does not really talk about the fact that what somebody might consider harassment, another person might consider typical workplace behaviour, depending on where they come from.

Again, I do not want to make excuses for somebody who is a harasser—that is the last thing I want to do—but what I would like to say is that perhaps all of us, our political parties, and Parliament itself need to think about providing management and leadership training to people who have not been in that situation before. Somebody who has worked in a very small, highly stressful group situation might think that communicating in certain way to team members is appropriate, but if they are ported here or to another organization, that behaviour is not going to translate.

When we come here as new members, we are kind of given O'Brien and Bosc and are told to be on our way. I often wonder if there is something that we could do or put in place to give people who have never managed staff before a bit of a leg up on understanding what is common practice.

I know this might sound like really common sense stuff to the average Canadian, who might ask, “Don't you know how to treat somebody appropriately?”, but the way I take harassment as it is defined in the bill is that it is in the eye of the beholder, and then we need to have that level of training, as my colleague said about the importance of education.

I also think that a more difficult conversation to have is that of resiliency. This is a highly stressful workplace where we are making decisions on the fly and emotions get tense. I realize it is incumbent upon each of us to treat one another like human beings, but at the same time, there are going to be situations in which we have to make decisions quickly and somebody might not be consulted. There is this intensity to our work here.

For these reasons, we also have to have a conversation about what resiliency looks like in that situation, so that time after time we could have a common understanding on what the culture of this place looks like that could be turned over to new people.

I think that true cultural change is only going to happen if we talk about these very difficult and sort of intangible things. Right now we have a good start on a framework in this place, but there is a lot of subjectivity to how it is being applied. I just worry that we are going to have a lack of consistency. I worry about the ability of people to use it functionally. I certainly hope my colleagues will consider this as we go forward.

The last thing I want to speak about is that broader cultural change. As I am sure happens with other colleagues here, especially female colleagues, once a week I will get a call from media asking if I would like to comment on something. This week, for example, it was on the Premier of Alberta receiving death threats, which is completely wrong and completely disgusting. I condemn that.

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However, there needs to be a broader cultural change in our country to not accept this type of behaviour within the political discourse writ large. I think we are all guilty of it from time to time, but certainly when it comes to violence and threats of rape, I am just tired of talking about that. I said that in my first speech. I have a lot of things that I want to talk about, that I want to use my voice for, and I find that week after week it is media request after media request to talk about how I feel as a woman in politics about this or how I feel about that.

I am just so tired of how we are not talking about the issues. Certainly I have a role and we all have a role to ensure that we have a healthy work environment here, but there needs to be a broader cultural change. This bill will not fix all of that. I think it will provide a framework in which we will operate, but I want to impart to colleagues that this bill is not the be-all and end-all. Yes, we had to start somewhere, but I think there are going to be some bumps along the road, as we have seen with colleagues in this place over the last couple of months, to be perfectly frank.

Those are my thoughts. I do not think we have adequately addressed the vexatious complaints issue, I do not think we have talked about consent, and I do not think we have talked about training, either in terms of how to be a good manager or in terms of how to ensure that we have resiliency when we are here.

To me, that would be the next iteration of this conversation. It would be to ensure that we are creating a broader cultural change as we move forward.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Yes, we must put an end to sexual harassment.

Under Bill C-65, employers have three obligations: prevent harassment and violence, respond to occurrences of harassment or violence, and support employees affected by harassment and violence. These three elements are part of the bill. There will also be an annual report and a five-year review of the legislation.

Can my colleague speak to those points?

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, five years is a long time. I appreciate my colleague's comments, but I am concerned that the reality of this place is that things are litigated in the media that perhaps should not be, and that process undermines legitimate victims who come forward and makes the process more difficult for them because they understand that they might have to discuss the harassment they went through in the media, even when it is a very private, personal thing that they perhaps just do not want to talk about. I would be an example of that.

On the other hand, five years is a long time for us, when many colleagues in this place have had complaints against them that are currently being litigated in the media. I worry that the only recourse for them is libel litigation, and that is just not productive for anybody, so I do not know what the answer is. How do we remove the political aspect of this while maintaining the integrity of this framework? It is something we should get some more expert

testimony on, and we should ensure that this bill deals with it sooner than five years from now.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that there should be consequences when somebody makes a false accusation. I find that a little bit difficult, because for years victims have obviously had a lot of difficulty in coming forward because it is very difficult to prove these types of accusations. I would like to hear from the member what she believes would be a way to handle the situation of women and men victims of this type of issue having a lot of difficulty coming forward.

Would it not stop them from coming forward if the consequences were too tough, and would it not raise fear in victims?

• (1600)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: As I said in my speech, Madam Speaker, it is the exact opposite. I want there to be a place where people can come forward. I worry, though, that there will be situations in which vexatious complaints will be made. We know this to be the case, and it is difficult to talk about, and I in no way want to cast aspersions on people who are finally coming forward when there has not been this kind of culture for many years.

The point I am trying to make is that there will be situations in which vexatious complaints will be made. Rather than a discussion in the media or in public, this perpetuated myth that my colleague talked about—with which I agree—is that oftentimes people say victims are just making it up. If complaints are found to be vexatious through a proper system, with an arm's-length decision and no political interference, there needs to be some sort of recourse for people who have gone through that process. Yes, it is a really tough thing to talk about, but this process is completely devoid of that, whereas most harassment policies in other spheres of influence have that type of process implemented directly within them.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

I am extremely proud to speak today about Bill C-65, which is important legislation to address harassment and violence in federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces. Through this bill, our government is taking an important step toward building a country where Canadians are better protected from inappropriate behaviours, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, and where those who have experienced such abuse receive the support they need.

I was proud to sit on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the duration of its study of Bill C-65 and was privileged to have the opportunity to propose amendments to this bill.

Legislation alone will not solve the problem of harassment and violence.

[Translation]

We know that a cultural shift is also needed.

Government Orders

[English]

Sadly, we live in a society that has tolerated workplace harassment and violence, that accepts power imbalances and gender norms and creates and reinforces these behaviours.

However, it is our view that Bill C-65 will go a long way in supporting a much-needed and long-overdue cultural shift. With this legislation, the government is sending a clear message that harassment and violence in the workplace, including parliamentary workplaces, is entirely unacceptable. The negative impact of these toxic behaviours on the individuals who experience them, as well as on their families and co-workers, is enormous.

During a visit to Edmonton earlier this year, I met with members of the Union of Safety and Justice Employees who worked in the extremely toxic environment that had developed at the Edmonton maximum security prison. I hope they are watching today as the bill moves through the House, knowing the information that they shared with me helped to frame my work on committee as we studied the bill.

Over the course of the committee hearings, we heard from many witnesses who described situations and incidents that no one should have to endure. We heard from Beisan Zubi, a former Parliament Hill staffer, who described some of the sexual harassment she witnessed and in some cases was subjected to herself during her time on the Hill. These experiences included touching, groping, comments and come-ons, and older men telling stories to a table of young staffers about their sexual encounters with young staffers. Ms. Zubi recounted how at one point her body was being discussed by others right in front of her.

As a young Parliament Hill staffer many years ago, I too experienced and witnessed this type of behaviour, which was tolerated and accepted then and continues to be tolerated in some circles today.

The unfortunate reality is that many people who are harassed have felt as though they had no choice but to leave. They felt fundamentally unsafe and unsupported, or they stayed because they had no other option for financial reasons or out of fear for their colleagues whom they would leave behind. I was told by one staff member at Edmonton Max that she could not leave the good ones behind to suffer the abuse on their own.

One of the issues that has come up over and over again, especially on Parliament Hill, has to do with defining harassment and violence. Since the #MeToo movement and the important discussion that followed, I have noticed that there is a lot of confusion about what is and is not appropriate behaviour.

That is why the committee introduced a definition of harassment into Bill C-65. It will help employees and supervisors understand how to conduct themselves in a respectful and appropriate manner in the workplace and learn what behaviours might be unwelcome or inadvertently harmful.

Many have stayed silent because they knew their complaints would not be treated seriously and that bringing a complaint forward might even result in negative repercussions from their employer. In many cases, supervisors themselves are the perpetrators. That is why

we made an amendment to the bill at committee stage to allow employees to come forward to someone other than their direct supervisor, which would give them more options to report.

Many Canadians continue to work every day knowing they will be subjected to inappropriate behaviour from their co-workers or supervisors. This mentality is still deeply ingrained in our culture. These experiences are all too common and take place in all types of workplaces. Many women nod in recognition when I ask how many of them have taken a different route to get to their desk in the morning to avoid that one person.

There needs to be an understanding that this behaviour cannot and will not be tolerated and that this is a country where no one should have to endure harassment or violence of any kind.

To this end, we are putting into place a comprehensive approach that takes the full spectrum of harassment and violence in the workplace into consideration, and we are expanding coverage to parliamentary workplaces for the first time. This approach focuses on preventing these behaviours before they happen; responding effectively when they do occur; and supporting victims, survivors, and employees throughout the process.

• (1605)

Once the new process is put in place, we expect to see a better understanding of what workplace harassment and violence is and what behaviours are unacceptable, as well as more willingness among employees to speak up about this behaviour understanding that they have a right to be safe. Ultimately, we expect to see a culture change in the workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and violence.

We know that legislation can never be the only fix for the pervasiveness of harassment and violence in the workplace in Canada. Culture change requires work and it will take all of us, not just within government, to see that change through. Legislation is one tool our society has in its tool box and I am proud to have been part of this process to strengthen our laws around violence and harassment so that survivors have more support.

In order to drive a culture change in workplaces, we know that we need to play a more active role in raising awareness and educating workplace parties around the issue of harassment and violence in the workplace. We will work closely with employers and employees and other key stakeholders through the regulatory process to provide an opportunity for them to influence the design of the specific requirements of employers and employees.

We will also undertake extensive education and outreach to ensure that employees understand their rights and employers understand their roles and responsibilities. The good news is that a culture change is under way. The global movement against workplace harassment and violence on social media has brought a great deal of attention to the issue and has shed much-needed light on it. I am immensely impressed by the bravery of those who have shared their stories.

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More and more people are having these conversations, not just in the media and in politics, but in workplaces around the world. They are more than just conversations, but transformational change in our understanding of healthy workplaces.

All members of the House agree on the importance of the bill and are committed to working together to get this important piece of legislation right. Throughout our committee hearings and during debate on the bill, there has been an unprecedented level of all-party co-operation, something that speaks to the importance of this legislation.

I am proud to speak to the bill today as I strongly believe it is a very important step forward in our efforts to improve our workplaces, one that would help create healthy, respectful environments where employees feel safe and are not afraid of reprisal, and where businesses increase their productivity and prevent losing talent and experience.

I would like to thank the departmental officials for their hard work in helping to put the bill together and also assisting us during the committee as we navigated the complex aspects of the bill. It was an honour to sit in with members of the committee as we studied the legislation. I extend a special thanks to the witnesses who shared their stories, their advice, and wisdom with the committee to inform our discussions. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all members of the House for their support in getting the bill to the next step in the parliamentary process.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, we in this place are quite united in our desire to ensure that workplace harassment, sexual harassment, these kinds of activities are no longer tolerated or accepted in any part of our society, although the bill only goes to the issues surrounding work within government and particularly here in Parliament.

I also worked here many years ago when I was in the office of the minister of the environment in the 1980s and can attest to knowing exactly how much young women had to put up with. No young woman or young man should ever have to put up with the kind of cavalier attitude that boys will be boys and that we should let these things go by and not stand our ground.

I agree with the member that this is a sea change. We are seeing a transformational change that is global, in re-examining those things that were considered to be a patriarchal right to speak to women in different ways than they would speak to a male employee without giving it a second thought. Are there other places where the member thinks this Parliament could do more? The bill is a good step, but it is not going to be enough to make a society-wide transformation.

•(1610)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her work on this issue. She is absolutely right. Legislation can only go so far. We had a lot of conversations at committee about the regulations that will accompany the bill.

When it comes to political parties, we need a process within each party for staffers to come forward. That is not something that will be legislated within this bill, but we certainly need the opportunity for all staffers to feel safe to come forward.

In my opinion, it needs to be someone completely independent. It cannot be done within the parties. I feel that staff need to be able to come forward to someone who is independent to share their concerns. Once that has been done, the legislation can kick in, in terms of what the framework is. It is important for those processes to continue as we move forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's speech.

Under this bill, the legislation must be reviewed every five years. That is important, because our values and customs need to improve. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the idea of enshrining this in law. I wonder if she could talk about the benefits of this five-year review and the reports that must be submitted annually.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. It was something I brought up during the committee study when I asked witnesses whether the legislation should be reviewed.

It is important that we make sure legislation is working properly, and having that review in place will allow us to look back and determine which parts of the legislation were working and which parts were not. Quite honestly, if we find out within two years that a part is not working and we need to change it, we have that ability, but this will require every government in the future to make sure it is looking at the legislation to see how it can be approved.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, during discussion of this legislation at the committee stage, an amendment was brought forward by the Conservative members regarding timelines.

When a victim comes forward with a complaint and it is made official, as it stands right now there is no timeline in place with regard to how much time the investigation should take. It could take one year, two years, five years, or 10 years. This seems to re-victimize the victim because it lacks due process.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on why the party opposite turned down this amendment and feels that it is in the best interest of victims to prolong these investigations.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, we listened to the testimony that we heard at committee and we asked officials about the best way to frame the legislation. We framed the legislation based on the testimony we heard at committee.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really happy to be here today to speak to this very important bill.

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With Bill C-65, our government is taking an important step towards building a country where all Canadians are better protected from workplace harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, and where victims of such abuse receive the support they need. I am certain that all members of the House will agree that we must ensure that no one is prevented from fully participating in society as a result of bullying, harassment, hate, or violence.

As a government, it is critical that all of us understand these phenomena, so that we can determine how to stop them. Over the past two years, we have consulted a number of stakeholders, our partners, and all Canadians to understand how the problem of harassment and violence is currently being handled in federally regulated workplaces. It became essential that we look at how to strengthen our anti-harassment and anti-violence measures.

Two types of consultation took place: a public consultation through an online survey, and a series of round tables and teleconferences with stakeholders. Following those consultations, we prepared a report on our findings from the engagement activities we had held with the Canadian public, unions, employers, non-governmental organizations, academics, and other experts. The report was published in November, and I invite all members of the House and all Canadians to read it, if they have not already.

I want to spend a few minutes on our key findings. First, we noted that levels of harassment and violence remain high, even here in Canada. Although the survey was not representative, since all respondents self-selected, the results were nonetheless alarming. Harassment was the most common type of behaviour experienced by online survey respondents, 60% of whom reported having experienced it, while 30% said that they had experienced sexual harassment, 21% that they had experienced violence, and 3% that they had experienced sexual violence. Among respondents who had experienced sexual harassment, 94% were women.

The second finding from the consultations has to do with prevention measures. Although there are policies to prevent workplace harassment and violence, work must be done to raise employer and employee awareness of these issues. Awareness is part of prevention. If employers are more aware of the problem, they will be able to understand what is happening in their workplace and respond appropriately. We need to face facts. All too often, incidents are not reported, and when they are, the response is ineffective.

The third finding has to do with the measures taken in response to such incidents. Although 75% of online survey respondents who had experienced harassment or violence reported the most recent incident, 41% of them said that no attempt was made to resolve the issue. Of those respondents who did not report the most recent incident, many feared reprisals if they filed a complaint. Nevertheless, employers must ensure that their workplaces are free from harassment and violence. Despite everything, it is not always mandatory for employers to provide support mechanisms for victims.

The fourth finding of the consultations was that little support is currently available for victims of harassment and violence. Most respondents believed that employers, the government, and unions should be responsible for providing support to help victims feel safe

and secure in their workplace. What is more, stakeholders told us that clear written policies are needed so that organizations know how to respond to allegations of workplace harassment and violence. It is therefore important to educate employers so that they can provide effective support for people who report acts of violence or harassment.

The last finding of the consultations has to do with under-reporting and insufficient data.

● (1620)

As I said earlier, people in these situations are afraid to file a complaint because they fear reprisals. Stakeholders agreed that appropriate data should be collected to track results. In the end, we concluded that the existing measures are just not good enough. There is no comprehensive system in place to prevent and address harassment and violence. Instead, we have a patchwork of federal laws and policies on these issues.

For example, violence is covered in part II of the Canada Labour Code, which applies to all federally regulated workplaces, including the public service. However, harassment is dealt with in part III of the Canada Labour Code, which does not apply to public servants, only to federally regulated private-sector employees. Moreover, neither part covers parliamentary workplaces.

During our consultations, experts told us that we should treat occurrences of harassment and violence as a continuum of inappropriate behaviours, extending from teasing, which is not always funny, to physical violence. We need a comprehensive approach. We need to be clear about the sources of those behaviours and the consequences.

Essentially, we need a cultural shift. Grey areas are no longer good enough. We need to embrace the idea that Canada has zero tolerance for all forms of workplace harassment and violence. I am pleased to say that this bill reflects the consultations and will meet many of those needs. I am very proud of the work we have done on Bill C-65. This new legislation will initiate a cultural shift in federally regulated workplaces thanks to a new framework that will better protect employees from harassment and violence. It will go a long way toward de-normalizing harassment and violence by preventing and reducing these problems.

In closing, as I said, the results of the consultations are clear: the measures in place do not go far enough. We must make it our goal to bring about a profound cultural shift that leads us to civility and respect and puts human rights above all differences.

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Let us not forget that violence is born out of inequality and that inequality is born out of discrimination against women and others who are victims of it. It is therefore of the utmost importance that acts of harassment and violence are addressed at every level so that these injustices do not go unpunished. That is the purpose of Bill C-65.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for her speech and for being one of many seeking change.

Under the Liberals' bill, employers need an internal policy to drive deep cultural change. That is what employers, women's groups, and union representatives wanted from the committee. They asked for clear guidelines in the Canada Labour Code so employers would know what constitutes an appropriate code of conduct.

A number of groups even proposed a code of ethics, but the Liberals rejected the idea for reasons known only to themselves. A code of ethics could have been added to the Canada Labour Code to help employers define their internal policies with the help of guidelines on immediate assistance, handling complaints, confidentiality, and protection of private information.

Why is none of that available to employers, who do not really know what to do in terms of prevention and enforcing a framework that applies to anything that might happen in a workplace? That is something all the parties wanted, but the Liberals refused.

• (1625)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

There are three very important elements of the regulatory framework that will be mandatory for employers, namely preventing harassment and violence, responding when incidents involving harassment or violence do occur, and supporting the victims of harassment and violence.

Many other things are also included in those three elements. Regarding the first one, preventing harassment and violence, employers must ensure that employees receive training and they must work with employees to put a prevention policy in place. Everyone needs to participate, employees and employers alike. As for the second element, responding to incidents involving harassment or violence, employers must respond within a specific time frame to address the complaint and inform the complainant of the appropriate privacy safeguards in place.

There are therefore plenty of things in place to ensure that employers' obligations are taken into account.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for her moving speech.

As a member of the status of women committee myself, I heard many witnesses, including women from indigenous, immigrant, and LGBTQ2 communities, talking about several topics we have studied. We heard from many victims who did not have the courage to report their aggressor. As a female parliamentarian, I myself have been bullied—I am not talking about sexual harassment—and I reported the people who tried to bully me.

As a fellow female parliamentarian, can my colleague explain how a few years from now, after Bill C-65 passes, the new climate on the Hill might encourage more women to get into politics? Will this bill increase women's participation?

How does she see—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Excuse me, I have to give the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles time to answer the question.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that the more women we have on Parliament Hill, the more the culture will change. It is a deeply entrenched culture that we have to change.

Bill C-65 will help change the culture. There are three important things, as I was saying earlier. The regulatory framework seeks to prevent incidents, intervene effectively to support the victims and survivors, and help employers.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

I wish it were unnecessary for me to stand here today to speak to this bill. I wish that harassment and violence were actions of long ago and things of the past. I wish that discrimination were eradicated with the movement of Martin Luther King, Jr. and that when women were granted equal rights before the law, including the right to vote and own property, they were also guaranteed fair treatment at all times. I wish there were no need for Bill C-65, that it could be ruled redundant, outdated, or altogether unnecessary, but sadly, that is not the case, so here I am speaking to this piece of legislation.

“You look more beautiful than I remember,” he says, as he stares her up and down.

“Nice skirt. It shows off the best parts of you,” he says, as he leans over to get a better look.

“It's just fact. Men are better MPs than women,” he says to his colleague. “Women are too emotional to make good leaders.”

“It is really nice to see you,” he says, as he moves his hand over her knee and toward her thigh.

These are just a few examples of the comments and gestures women all too often face in this place and in other workplaces across this country. They might seem like innocent or playful comments or gestures to some, but they are, in fact, altogether inappropriate and unacceptable. While women are not the sole targets of harassment and violence, it is right to point out that women disproportionately are the recipients of unwanted gestures and comments like these.

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That said, it is important for me to state that the issue before the House is not a male-only issue, nor is it a female-only issue, nor is it a political partisan issue. In fact, the matter before the House is largely a power issue. Specifically, in this place, it has to do with the power imbalance that exists between employees and employers. Staff find themselves at the mercy of their employers. When it comes to hiring and firing, MPs have complete freedom to do so at will. At present, there are no overarching protocols or mechanisms of accountability in place to give guidance to this structure. An MP can hire or fire someone simply because he or she wishes to do so.

For every paid staffer, there are also dozens of interns who are looking for jobs, which then leaves staff having to be very careful about whether they report an incident. After all, they might lose their jobs, or they fear some other form of reprisal.

We heard at committee that those who are mistreated by their employers are often afraid to speak out, because they fear what the repercussions might be. This imbalance of power without proper preventive measures and reporting mechanisms can create an environment that is incredibly unsafe for people to work in and can leave staff feeling as if they have no other option than to keep silent.

For these reasons, my colleagues and I welcome the initiative the government has put forward through Bill C-65. We have to work together as parliamentarians to create an environment that is free of harassment and violence, and to this end, those of us on this side of the House are committed.

As members of Canada's Parliament, we are meant to serve as role models. That is part of our job. We should strive for excellence in everything we do. We are called to function with the utmost level of integrity; to treat others with dignity, respect, and honour; to be humble; to work hard; and to serve the betterment of others. This is true public service. It is what we signed up for. That is why we are in this place.

Bill C-65 is only a first step. On its own, the document before the House is not enough to put a complete stop to harassment and violence within this workplace or any other publicly funded workplace. Instead, I would contend that a culture change is needed. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us as members, as senators, as employers, and as role models to act rightly and to be above reproach at all times. We must take personal responsibility for our actions, and we must choose to treat others well. I will comment further on this in just a moment, but first permit me to summarize what Bill C-65 would achieve.

Right now, federally regulated workplaces, including Parliament Hill, are without a streamlined approach when it comes to policies and rules on harassment and violence. Bill C-65 would actually amend the Canada Labour Code to require employers to do all they can to prevent harassment and violence from taking place in the workplace. Should a concern arise, the employer would then be required to investigate and report any incident brought to his or her attention. As part of this initiative, federally regulated employers would be required to have a sexual harassment policy in place and to report to Parliament how many complaints had been put forward over the course of time and how they had been handled.

● (1630)

We have always supported the intent of this bill, but before it went to committee, we had a few amendments we wanted to see made. Although we feel the legislation could be further strengthened by taking a stronger stand on behalf of victims, we are pleased with this bill overall and with where we are landing.

There were a number of Conservative amendments that were adopted. One of the biggest concerns I had when this bill was first introduced was the fact that the labour minister would have the power to investigate himself or herself if a complaint were brought against him or her by an employee. This concerned me because it would put the employees who work for the minister in a very precarious situation. If one goes to their boss to complain about their boss only to have them investigate themselves, then that is a problem. We were able to put forward an amendment to fix this, which would take the power out of the hands of the minister and instead put it with the deputy minister, thereby allowing for the protection of a victim who might come forward with a complaint.

Furthermore, my Conservative colleagues and I successfully introduced an amendment that would protect against political interference regardless of the party that might be in power at the time. Originally, the legislation would have allowed the minister to conduct the investigation into any member of Parliament in this House. It would mean that the minister of labour could investigate a Conservative one way, an NDP another way, a Bloc Québécois another way, and a Liberal member another way. It would not have set a complete streamlined fashion by which all these investigations would have to be completed. It was partisan in nature.

Therefore, it also concerned me that there could be potential for political interference given the party of the day, whichever party that might be. This problem was resolved at committee by amending the legislation, again by putting the investigative authority or power into the hands of the deputy minister and out of the hands of the partisan minister who serves as minister for labour. Ultimately, this would preserve the integrity of the investigative process. I am extremely proud of the work accomplished in committee, and the fact that it had all-party support going forward.

Nevertheless, there is one amendment I feel very strongly should have made its way into this legislation, and unfortunately it did not. As Conservatives, we always take a stand for the victim—always. To this end, we introduced an amendment that would implement strict timelines for investigations into incidents of harassment to make sure that a victim's concern would be dealt with in a timely manner. Unfortunately, this amendment was voted down by the Liberals. As a result, an employee could effectively make an official complaint and the investigation could take one year, five years, or 10 years without there being any sort of recourse for that complainant. This concerns me, because that means the victim would be tied up in this process of a long investigation, perhaps could be re-victimized in that process, and there would be nothing that he or she could do about it. There needs to be a timeline placed on this in order to protect those coming forward with their vulnerable stories.

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While this legislation would help create a more wholesome work environment, I believe more is required than just policy. As stated earlier, I believe it is incumbent upon each one of us in parliamentary roles to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and violence, from becoming an issue in the first place. We can do this in a few ways. We can have clear, comprehensive policies in place, and make our expectations very well known within our offices. Furthermore, we can participate in sensitivity training and ask our staff to do the same.

When we witness inappropriate conduct, we can also call it out for what it is. It is not okay to make sexual jokes, touch without consent, intimidate others, use rude or insulting language or gestures, use derogatory language or name-calling, make sex-related comments about a person's physical characteristics or actions, and it is certainly not okay to share intimate photos. These are the types of behaviour that we can start to call out in this place, thereby allowing ourselves to participate as a collective in creating an environment where everyone gets to thrive.

To see lasting change, I believe a cultural change is necessary. This is a matter of the human heart, and we will need to work together in order to achieve the culture we desire in this place. This policy before the House is one good step in that direction. It is incumbent upon all of us to make a personal choice to participate in the lasting changes.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is encouraging when we see members from all sides of the House coming together and recognizing a very important social issue, and then contributing in a positive way, whether during second reading or at committee stage. From what I understand, there was a great deal of dialogue and a lot of passion with respect to the presentations that were made, and a number of amendments were built through consensus and then passed. It is a given that not everything was resolved. However, it was quite encouraging to see that sense of co-operation in recognizing the importance of the issue we are debating today.

I wonder if my colleague from across the way can provide her thoughts with respect to the degree to which it is better legislation today because of the amendments that were brought forward in such a consensus fashion.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I would agree with the hon. member. As I said throughout my speech, during the committee stage, when we were discussing this piece of legislation and bringing forward amendments, I would draw some attention to the one that I was most passionate about, which was taking the power out of the hands of the labour minister and putting it into the hands of the deputy minister. In doing so, we make it non-partisan. We make it so that an investigation is an investigation is an investigation. There is a proper procedure that is followed, no matter the party being investigated or the party that the member belongs to. That was a good example of where the committee was able to come together. The members were able to discuss it and come to a consensus on an item that I believe very strongly strengthens this bill.

• (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would like to address a couple of the concerns that the member has raised. With respect to a timeline, it should be noted we have added that, in the regulatory process, employers will have to act as quickly as possible. Not all investigations are the same; in other words, the cookie-cutter timelines do not necessarily work. This is about good investigations, which is what needs to be highlighted, not fast investigations.

I should also note that part II of the Canada Labour Code protects employees from reprisals.

Perhaps the member would like to add some of her thoughts with respect to that, or provide additional comment.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I understand that pulling off an investigation and having it done well can take some time, and that not every investigation is the same. That is certainly true. Therefore, I want to account for that.

At the same time, one of the things we heard from witnesses who came before the committee was the incredible fear they had of coming forward with their stories and asking for action to be taken on their behalf. These individuals certainly did not want the process to last years on end without any sort of wrap-up process, declaration, or decision being reached. Therefore, it is incumbent upon this House to put regulations in place with respect to that timeline in order to make sure that a victim's needs are met, that the investigation is carried out in a timely fashion, and that she or he is not revictimized by the process itself, as there could be some exploitation that takes place in an extended time frame.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate the fact that many of the speakers this afternoon have talked about legislation and regulation as important steps, but that a cultural change on Parliament Hill, within our workplaces, is the work that we all still need to be doing. I wonder if my hon. colleague would like to comment on some of the things she would like to see us do immediately. We know that prevention and intervention are not enough and that we have to change the culture.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I would draw back to some points that I made in my speech. One is certainly policy, and putting policies in place even within our offices. As an employer, it is my responsibility to talk to my staff with respect to what my expectations are, and what is appropriate and not appropriate. It is my responsibility as an employer to talk to my employees if I notice anything that is out of line. It is my responsibility to hold myself accountable and to make sure I am treating my employees with the utmost respect and honour, and that I am functioning with the greatest amount of integrity possible. Those are the sorts of decisions that we as MPs within this place have to make on a daily basis.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Employment Insurance; and the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, Employment.

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Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lethbridge, who does excellent work at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I am pleased to take part in today's debate in the House to speak to and support Bill C-65. I commend the hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour on introducing this bill to amend the Canada Labour Code on harassment and violence, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

I am also proud to see the members' commitment to find solutions to this sad reality. The non-partisan discussions that took place following the introduction and first reading of this bill last November and at second reading in January were constructive. A number of amendments were proposed. I am pleased to note that committee members from all parties respected each other's representations and successfully worked together. A number of amendments were presented to improve the bill.

Part 1 of Bill C-65 amends the Canada Labour Code to strengthen the existing framework for the prevention of harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in the workplace. Part 2 amends part III of the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act with respect to the application of Part II of the Canada Labour Code to parliamentary employers and employees. The stage is set. That is what the bill says. Now let us talk about what it means.

Sexual misconduct and sexual harassment have no place in Canadian society. Most of us have to work for a living, and we spend many hours at work. People should be able to live and work safely, but that is clearly not always the case. Unfortunately, this is also a problem in the public service and on Parliament Hill. It is therefore the government's responsibility to protect victims' rights. The government must also focus on helping victims and making sure the process is fair and impartial. It must ensure that sexual harassers suffer the consequences because a symbolic, toothless law will do very little to tackle the problem.

Since the victims are generally women, and since it is not easy for a man to put himself in the shoes of the victims, I want to share part of a speech that my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill gave on January 29, 2018, regarding the dynamic here, in Ottawa, and on the Hill:

In Ottawa, in the sense of it being a nexus of power in Canada, it is an intense place. Leaders in all three branches of government, senior public servants, military leaders, the diplomatic corps, the Parliamentary Press Gallery, highly paid lobbyists, smart political staff, civil society, and business leaders all converge in one tightly confined space. They are all trying to accomplish big things. Many are assertive and ambitious. Many are highly skilled at their crafts. Many hold privileged positions of influence, and many think very highly of themselves. It is a highly tribal environment where information is a commodity and blind partisanship, conformity, loyalty, and acquiescence are often traits significantly valued above judgment, compassion, or acting with dignity.

As soon as there is a hierarchy with subordinates, there is a risk that some people will become more vulnerable. It is up to the government to protect the public and to create recourse mechanisms. Try to imagine what happens when the harasser is an employer, a supervisor, or a work colleague. Even if the actions are not necessarily as extreme as those that make the headlines, we have to

remember that a victim must spend five days a week, for eight hours a day or more, in close proximity to their harasser. How uncomfortable and terrifying it must be to experience that every day. Everyone should be able to be safe and comfortable at work.

• (1645)

Victims subjected to this behaviour become fragile, and no one in Canada should have their safety compromised when they are just trying to do their job. This means that it is very important that the law clearly set out and explain all available recourse.

We Conservatives want to make sure that the government focuses on help for victims, as it promised to do. To do so, the systems created to support victims also need to be solid, well established, and safe for victims. They also must be accessible and well known. Information must be shared in a way that reaches everyone.

Here is an idea off the top of my head. We could have a government-led hotline that victims could reach easily without the risk of consequences, rather than having to go through their supervisor, who might unfortunately be complicit or could even be the harasser.

As legislators, we have a duty to make the information accessible and to facilitate reporting based on the fundamental principle of always protecting victims.

The committee team introduced and supported mandatory sexual harassment training as an essential component of this bill. I think that is an extremely important aspect of this bill. I would even go so far as to say that mandatory training on this subject should, if possible, be incorporated into the orientation training given to new employees in all contexts. We have a responsibility to raise awareness up front, before this kind of behaviour becomes entrenched in our culture.

This is because I sincerely believe part of the problem stems from ignorance. There are people who simply are not aware that certain behaviours are unacceptable and should never occur, least of all in the workplace. I think there is a certain naivety at work here as well. We also need to think about the complexities of life in our modern society. We have only to think of typical messages like "real men don't cry, real men are strong, real men are in control, real men fight". It is sad, but these messages are still around today. That is why mandatory training gets a resounding yes. We should try to reach as many people as possible and repeat this message regularly on multiple platforms.

I want to emphasize one last very important point. The problem of harassment could evolve again, in the context of cyber-bullying, for example. Consequently, the committee's Conservative members also proposed and supported a mandatory review of the legislation after five years. I am pleased that a five-year review is one of the amendments presented by the committee.

To return to what my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill told us in January, judgment, compassion, or acting with dignity are not often highly valued. We must work to change that on Parliament Hill and throughout Canada.

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I am proud that I live in the most beautiful country in the world and that I represent the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. Even though there is always something that can be improved, it is important that the government tackle the problems that affect Canadians. It must take concrete action to improve the lives of our fellow Canadians and always consider the victims, who deserve all the attention they need. Bill C-65 is a step forward for our society. My colleagues can be proud because we worked together, without partisanship, all the while keeping in mind the main goal of protecting victims. I say it very humbly, it is a credit to us all as members of the House of Commons.

The Conservative Party will be supporting Bill C-65.

• (1650)

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his speech on this bill and I would like to ask him some questions.

All political parties put partisanship aside and agreed on the amendments in committee. Everyone agrees that this bill will result in major changes. Of course, there is much work to be done, but it is a good start.

Can the member explain how this bill will bring about a change in the culture with respect to sexual harassment and violence here on the Hill and across the country?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vimy. This is a worthwhile bill. It is not perfect, much like most of the bills that are introduced here, and then passed and implemented. We are taking an important step today. I think this sends a clear message that elected officials in the House of Commons are aware of this situation. These things do not happen only to celebrities. These types of situations obviously sell papers, but they have also led us to discuss this societal problem and implement measures to improve the quality of life of our constituents.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, indeed, the committee that studied this bill was truly a non-partisan committee. There are some flaws in the bill, and I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts.

Some young women, my age or younger, are working in precarious situations. These women do not necessarily have access to joint health and safety committees. Under this bill, joint health and safety committees will not be allowed to receive complaints and investigate. They were previously allowed to do so.

All of the unions recommended that this remain a practice, since there are many experts on these joint committees and training is provided. There is a wide range of experts who can investigate issues related to culture, language, gender, or age. This would give victims and survivors a sense of trust and enable them to come forward with confidence.

However, the Liberals voted against this amendment and they did not explain why. This would actually enable women to come forward.

• (1655)

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank the fine member for Salaberry—Suroît for her question. She does excellent work and is a

member of the young parliamentarians network of the APF. I thank her for being part of the APF.

As I mentioned in my speech, the bill is not perfect. It is just a step forward. Like her, I am disappointed that some measures were not put forward because the Liberals have a majority on the committee.

I would like to remind members of another amendment that was rejected. That amendment sought to allow employees of companies with 20 or fewer employees to have access to confidential reporting in order to protect victims. The idea is always to protect victims. Whether the victim works in an institution with 150,000 employees or a small business with five employees, it is just as important that he or she be protected. An employee might be vulnerable in a small business because of proximity. Everyone knows each other. I think that victims should have access to a confidential reporting process.

I share my colleague's concern. Once again, let us believe in the future. By taking one small step at a time, we will do what needs to be done to improve our society. I hope that common sense will prevail and that we can fix things in the future.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

I am very pleased to speak to this bill, which underwent a non-partisan study. All of the members worked on it together for the benefit of survivors of workplace harassment and violence. We have taken a big step forward in that regard. The NDP will support this bill so that it can become a reality.

We are on the cusp of major changes, not only in labour relations, but also in matters of gender equality. Some courageous voices have been raised in every sector against sexist acts, harassment, and assault. We have only to look at the #MeToo movement, which was launched in the United States to speak out about assault and, in some cases, about allegations of rape made by actresses. In France, a wave of naming and shaming of abusers started with the hashtag #BalanceTonPorc, which also involved Quebec. In our province, we also remember the hashtag #AgressionNonDénoncée, about unreported rapes, that was launched on social media by the Fédération des femmes du Québec in 2014.

The purpose of these citizen-led movements is not only to change the culture, but also to call on the government and parliamentarians to take action. Bill C-65 emerged from these movements, and I must commend this first step. I urge my colleagues to vote in favour of this bill. Although some aspects are incomplete, it is a starting point to allow federal workers in sectors like transport, banking, or telecommunications to be able to benefit from protection from harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence.

Government Orders

Half of all Canadian women say that they have experienced unwanted sexual pressure. Nearly half of all Canadian women have suffered from some form of sexual harassment at the workplace. For a young woman my age or younger, that figure rises to nearly 66%. We can no longer hide this basic reality in our society. There is no more room for “but”, for “it has always been like that”, or for other such language to deny any progress. A number of female MPs and former MPs have experienced sexist or sexual violence or harassment. Many of our staffers, male and female alike, have suffered this type of violence in our offices, at receptions, or elsewhere on Parliament Hill.

We are now all aware that this problem happens everywhere, no matter our party, our religion, or our philosophy. Bill C-65 lets us take a step forward by putting an end to this outdated form of patriarchal behaviour that affects many women, especially those from cultural communities or those earning minimum wage.

Other groups, such as rape crisis centres, explain how violence affects mainly women, especially those already experiencing discrimination based on skin colour, disability, sexuality, or mental health issues. Women are also more affected because of gender inequality.

The first version of Bill C-65 did not have a definition. Martine Faille, executive director of Centre D'Main de Femmes, which is located in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield in my riding, explained to my office staff how important the definition is and how unacceptable such actions and attitudes are in the work environment.

Recently, at the prompting of experts and advocacy groups in committee, an amendment to add a definition to the bill was accepted. It states:

[H]arassment and violence means any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.

That is a step forward.

Another amendment proposed in committee now allows for a five-year review of the act and its effectiveness. This is an extremely important exercise, because it allows us to verify and ensure that the act is being enforced and to identify any new needs or deficiencies that need to be addressed. However, there is still one problem with the amendment on the five-year review, namely that there is not enough statistical data.

We need data in order to see the big picture and know where we are going, what is not working, what the best practices are, and what is missing. However, we do not have that data, because even the bill itself contains no requirement for employers to track and log incidents that occur in their workplaces. If employers are not required to track incidents, how will we get a continuous stream of data coming in?

• (1700)

This is a flaw in the bill, and we would like it to be corrected.

Unfortunately, my colleagues across the aisle voted against certain amendments proposed by my colleague from Jonquière, an NDP member who has been working on this bill in committee since the

beginning. She also worked on the clause-by-clause study of the report. She proposed 17 amendments, but only 3 amendments were adopted.

The existing joint health and safety committees, especially in unionized workplaces, are currently authorized to receive and investigate complaints. The interesting thing is that joint committees have become expert resources, because they have been around for decades. They know the culture of the workplace, because their members come from that workplace. Employers are represented, but employees are too. There is also a diversity of experts who can meet the needs of the victim or the person who needs help. They are diverse in terms of age, sex, religion, and culture. This makes it easier for the person to feel at ease and report wrongdoing. That helps ensure that reports stay confidential.

The Liberals decided to exclude joint committees from receiving complaints and conducting investigations. That is a problem. All of the witnesses said that the contribution of these committees needed to be incorporated into the act, but the Liberals decided not to do that. We do not know why because they did not give any explanations.

Joint committees are a functional mechanism for dealing with harassment. As I was saying, joint committees have a lot of experience and a diverse group of investigators. These committees offer a lot of training and do a lot in the way of prevention. The government is saying that we need to change workplace culture, and these committees are part of that. The different points of view of these investigators are necessary in order to better understand the victim's living conditions both at work and outside of work. Finally, these committees will not be able to receive complaints. As I was saying, the government can remedy this situation by implementing regulations that would allow these joint committees to receive complaints. I sincerely hope that the government will do that. If the government really wants to provide all the necessary tools to make victims feel comfortable in a situation where their voices are heard and what they say is kept confidential, it needs to include these mechanisms in the bill. Employees need to have the opportunity to turn to joint committees or have access to other resources. That is a choice that helps victims decide which approach is best for them.

Another flaw I could talk about is the lack of assistance regarding internal policies. Employers should have to develop an internal policy. This should be part of the Canada Labour Code. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities heard from a number of employers, who asked for assistance and clearer guidelines. Some workers even suggested creating a code of conduct, because the notion of immediate assistance is not clear, nor is it clear how to handle cases and ensure confidentiality of private information. If employers do not know how, an internal policy in the Canada Labour Code would really help employers and employees feel respected.

In conclusion, I want to say that without codes of conduct and without financing, women who do not have the resources to follow up on their complaints could continue to experience harassment and violence.

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Karine Gagné, the coordinator of C.A.L.A.C.S. in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, supports women as they go through their legal processes and psychological recoveries every day.

• (1705)

She and her team helped more than 500 women last year. Victims of harassment and violence know that complaints will, unfortunately, be mismanaged if there is no joint committee or clear internal policy.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I am sure the member will have a chance to say more during questions and comments.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things we have heard a great deal about today is the fact that this is a social issue which all Canadians are very concerned about and want to see government not only bring in legislation such as this bill, but also to do more by communicating and working with other stakeholders, such as provincial entities or other forms of government.

One of the discussions I had over the weekend was about the importance of making sure the next generation is educated about the issue of harassment. It raises the flag for me in terms of what I might be able to do and I would put the challenge out to all members. What can we do individually and possibly collectively to ensure information is being passed on? For example, I will look at school divisions and how the issue of harassment can be part of a curriculum. If we can get younger people more aware of the importance of the issue, we can prevent a lot of the harassment in the future.

I put the challenge to my friend and colleague across the way. What does she think we can do in addition to passing good legislation like we are doing today?

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We could certainly do a lot when it comes to prevention in schools. I am a teacher by training, so this is close to my heart. Today, however, we are talking about a government bill aimed at preventing harassment and violence in workplaces, and we want to improve this bill before it becomes law.

As I said in my speech, if my colleague was listening carefully, at least three major aspects need improvement. We need to strengthen joint health and safety committees, not limit them, so that they can receive and investigate complaints. As for the five-year review of the legislation's effectiveness, we need to make sure that employers are required to register incidents so that up-to-date statistics are available. Lastly, we need to ensure that employers' internal policies are integrated into the Canada Labour Code, which is not the case under this bill. We can certainly continue to improve it by doing other things too. There were 17 amendments that were rejected in committee. I believe that this Parliament still has work to do on this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding if someone sees something inappropriate, whether it be physical harassment or sexual harassment, that unless the person it is happening to is willing to make the complaint, it is no good for anyone else to report it. How do we encourage people to make a complaint when they see what is happening, yet the victim is not prepared to report it?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. Clear internal policies are crucial to ensuring that people feel safe in healthy workplaces. That is what employers want, and it is what workers and union representatives want, but Bill C-65 is silent on the subject.

There is no clear internal policy to help employers introduce codes of conduct for handling complaints, protecting information, and providing immediate assistance to their employees. They even proposed a code of ethics, which the Liberals rejected. Joint health and safety committees that include people within the organization who know the workplace and its culture and are made up of people of different ages, genders, cultures, and religions would have helped victims feel safe. None of that is in the bill as written.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are at quite a time in our country. I am honoured to be representing Nanaimo—Ladysmith at this time.

First, we have an unprecedented opportunity for gender equality around the world. At the same time, I would argue that we have an unprecedented awareness of the impact that sexual harassment and workplace violence, and harassment, period, can have on workers and the fact that harassment should never be part of any job.

I think of my grandfather, John Osler, who was a lawyer for labour when there were not any in Canada, and the recognition of the violence done physically to people in the workplace and the importance of putting in place laws and frameworks to protect workers' physical safety. We now know our responsibility in this day and age is to have the same level of protection for people's workplace environment as it relates to harassment and sexual harassment. Therefore, we cannot pretend we do not know.

I am very aware of the media investigation this weekend about the threats against the life of New Democrat Premier Rachel Notley. I know she is not alone. Women in this House have been profiled as having received sexual harassment and threats of physical violence against them. Harassment is not part of a politician's job, so I am sorry for Rachel Notley.

While watching some of the media this weekend with my mom and dad, they observed that there was a great deal of hand-wringing but very little concrete action. What are we actually going to do? Talking about it or reporting on it is not enough.

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I was reminded of two years ago when the status of women committee, in its 2016 all-party consensus report, made recommendations to the government, to this Parliament, in particular recommendation 18. This is in the context of its study on ending violence against young women and girls, but, inevitably, there was a great deal of testimony that we heard about online harassment and cyber-bullying. Young women, like Rehtaeh Parsons and Amanda Todd, were harassed to the point that they took their own lives. There are horrible stories with which no family should ever have to contend.

When we asked the witnesses for remedies, they said that the previous Conservative government had removed part of the Canadian Human Rights Act, maybe for reasons of freedom of speech, which turned out leaving a very serious hole in our human rights legislation that we needed fixed immediately. Therefore, our recommendation was:

That the Government of Canada introduce legislation to restore Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act which permitted rights complaints to the federal Canadian Human Rights Commission for the communication of hate messages by telephone or on the Internet.

However, here it sits two years later. The government received an all-party recommendation to repair the damage the Conservative government did in the Harper era.

While we are talking about harassment in the workplace and while our attention is focused on the death threats that Premier Notley received, as reported last week, let us remember there are actions that we can take, and I urge that we take them. We need a little less conversation and a little more action.

Bill C-65 is an example of action, which the New Democrats welcome. We welcome anything that makes workplaces freer from harassment and creates a clearer path for employees. For employees on the Hill, there is this strange kind of cone of no-rules land somehow around the Labour Code, especially as it relates to harassment and sexual harassment. Therefore, we are glad to see the bill here. We are also glad that all parties have been able to work together, especially with the labour movement, which has very good advice on this file to try to bring changes to the bill.

We know the need is real. Fifty-three per cent of Canadian women have experienced unwanted sexual pressure. Fifty per cent of Canadian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. Sixty per cent of respondents experienced some form of harassment in the workplace, with nearly half of those from people with authority over them. Therefore, power is a big part of this dynamic. Women who are racialized, queer or indigenous and women living with disabilities all have a much harder time and receive a disproportionate amount of harassment and violence in the workplace. Therefore, the work needs to be done.

●(1715)

This legislation is mostly procedural. It sets up an investigatory process through which issues of violence or harassment in the workplace could be investigated fully and without prejudice. That is the intention. It follows two similar streams through both Parliament and government-regulated workplaces and industries such as telecommunications, transport, and banks, which is about 8% of the national workforce, as well as the people that work here with us

in Ottawa and in our constituency offices to provide us with vital support, as well as federally regulated workers across the country. The rules apply to parliamentarians and everybody.

We are glad to see the bill before the House. However—and there is always a “however”—there are some gaps, and we worked quite hard to try to fill them. I salute my friend to my left, the member for Saskatoon West, who is our former labour critic, and my colleague to my right, the member for Jonquière, both of whom led the charge in committee to try to bring many amendments forward and perfect the bill as much as we could.

Our strong disappointment remains that the joint health and safety committees have basically been removed from the process. These committees have worked for years, and it is a great disappointment that this legislation would remove them from doing their effective work. Every labour ally who came to committee asked for these committees to be returned to their roles. We proposed amendments, but they were not accepted by the Liberal-dominated committee. That continues to be a great disappointment. In the words of CUPE, the union that represents 650,000 workers in this country, limiting the role of the health and safety committees will have “a chilling effect” on workers' willingness to come forward and participate in the process.

The Liberal bill is an employer-driven process. If an employer is harassing an employee or if an employer has failed to create a safe workplace and regulate the other employees, then quite reasonably the person experiencing the harassment may not want to participate fully in a process that is dominated and controlled by his or her employer.

The health and safety committees have doing all kinds of good work in different areas of the Labour Code for all this time. If they had been used, an existing tool would have been used and an impediment to complaints would have been removed.

CUPE has deep experience in federally regulated industries. It has 650,000 members across the country, many of whom work in rail, ports, communications, and energy, all places that would be protected by this legislation.

We tried to bring forward a number of other amendments. Fortunately, three of them were taken up, including one with respect to the definition of “harassment” in the legislation, which all of our labour allies had called for. Certainly those of us who are employers want to have that clarity. I am glad that our perseverance resulted in that definition being brought in.

We also had input from the teamsters union, which wanted changes made to the Labour Code. It was pushing the government to clarify that mental health was included as part of this legislation. The Canadian Labour Congress very strongly voiced its concerns about a lack of capacity for labour investigators. PIPSC, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, was well represented. Workers at the DFO biological station in my riding are members of PIPSC. It is a very strong advocate. It wants to see Bill C-65 guarantee adequate representation for those involved.

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In closing, I would like to thank the government for bringing this legislation forward. I would also like to thank Conservative and New Democrat members for being able to advance some of the changes that we wanted to see, but I continue to urge the government to draw on the deep experience of the labour movement, which has been doing this hard work for many years. Let us not leave to regulation what we could transparently include in legislation right now.

• (1720)

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on my colleague's comments in regard to our labour movement. The labour movement as a whole has done a phenomenal job of protecting the rights of workers, and in good part probably has the experience that is necessary for us to move forward. To recognize the important role that our unions have played over the years, I look at this legislation as a step forward, which unions, management, and companies will be able to utilize into the future, hopefully with the idea of preventing harassment, but also to deal with the harassment taking place in our workforce today. It is one of the reasons why it is very important that we pass the legislation. I recognize that there are many different types of tools, and this is but one tool that I believe would be well utilized in the years ahead. I wonder if the member might want to provide some comments in regard to whether it is this or other aspects that unions in particular have been so supportive of and effective at in terms of advancing the issue of social justice on harassment issues.

• (1725)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, being unable to discern what that question was, I will take the opportunity to run through a list of the amendments that my colleague presented at the committee that were rejected. We have already talked about the role of the public safety and national security committee's motion that was moved, which, despite many witnesses calling for it, was not taken up by the government. We also proposed strengthening the prevention of mental illness in the Labour Code. Something that teamsters urged us to do was to have a very strong intervention on mental health. That was a motion that was rejected. There was a proposal that the fundamental corporate policies be listed in the Canada Labour Code so that this be fully transparent. Another idea was to schedule mandatory training sessions on sexual harassment so employers are fully aware of their responsibilities. I have another list twice as long, but I will leave it there.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with my friend from Nanaimo—Ladysmith and share her concerns that Premier Rachel Notley experiences death threats. I have already said in the media recently that I do as well. I want to hone in on one area where the comments are the most vile and are not really touched on by Bill C-65. Forgive me for going a bit outside the scope of this act. Does my friend from Nanaimo—Ladysmith not agree that we need to find a way to police the comments of social media, things that are essentially published? In the old days, by which I mean not that long ago, with anything that was published in a newspaper, the editors would make sure they knew the identity of the person posting a comment, and a comment could not be an incitement to hatred or violence. However, on Twitter and Facebook, we do not control those spaces. I wonder if my friend from Nanaimo—Ladysmith has any thoughts on that.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I welcome the question, Mr. Speaker.

It is true. At a time when threats of violence were phoned in or mailed in, that was one thing. The rest of the world did not see them in the way that people do on social media. Either way, I want to give deep thanks to all of the workers who support us as parliamentarians. They screen us from some of the most difficult comments, but they themselves take the brunt of that. That is a workplace issue, and I thank them for protecting us so well.

The thing I am concerned about, though, is that the sexual, misogynistic, hateful things that are said online are for everybody to see. I am concerned that others watching, especially women and marginalized groups, who have a hard time getting into places like this anyway because of the barriers they face, look at those comments online and think, “Do I want to subject my family to that?” We should not be doing anything that turns people off.

Therefore, the very first and best remedy that we have is to restore to the Canadian Human Rights Act the protections removed by the Conservative government—the Liberal government should have done this already—and to make online threats and comments subject to complaint in the same way that phone calls and letters are.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. I will share my time with the excellent member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*English*]

This is certainly an important issue, and it is a pleasure for me to rise to debate Bill C-65 at third reading. At second reading, when I spoke to this bill, I spoke in detail about the #MeToo movement, the practical and philosophical issues raised by that important movement, and the progress in terms of public awareness and public will to respond we have seen coming out of that discussion.

I will revisit some of those arguments later on, if time allows, but I want to begin by talking a little more about some of the practical issues around Bill C-65 and how those practical issues have been worked out through the legislative process. This bill is aimed at combatting harassment, specifically in the parliamentary precinct, but as well, more broadly, within the federally regulated workplace.

We are continuing to see the profound impact on politics, and certainly in other sectors of society, of the #MeToo movement, which has invited women to bring to light instances of previously undiscussed sexual harassment and assault. It has significantly increased awareness among men of the issues women face that we, as men, may not have been as aware of previously. It is important that we continue to encourage people to come forward to bring everyone's attention to this issue and to seek to strengthen the processes that protect victims and ensure more effective due process.

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What this bill intends to do is very laudable, and that is to further develop a strong, fair, and reliable process. Indeed, a clear, fair, reliable process is the best way to ensure that victims are heard, that perpetrators are punished, and that potential perpetrators are deterred. We can show that there is a clear process in place that confronts these issues that is objective, that is impartial, and that ensures that victims have their fundamental rights protected. This bill would strengthen the processes and mechanisms that are in place, again as I said, to combat harassment on Parliament Hill as well as in federally regulated workplaces.

Conservatives support this bill. I am pleased that our caucus, and in particular, our team on the committee, have engaged constructively with this process to propose and see the passage of amendments that have improved and strengthened the bill and strengthened the process and what will be its ultimate effectiveness.

I recall, during second reading debate, that my colleague from Lethbridge, our shadow minister for the Status of Women, gave an impassioned speech, working through some of the areas where the previous draft of the bill was flawed and needed to be improved. I recall that at the time, some members of the government were critical of her for criticizing the bill, for violating what was allegedly supposed to be the non-partisan tone of the discussion, because this is, after all, something we all agree is so important.

I would argue that precisely the importance of this issue is why we should dig deeper. We should ask questions. We should analyze the text and its practical implications to see if it would do the kinds of things we wish it to do. Despite some of the criticism across the way, that is precisely what the member for Lethbridge and other members of our caucus were doing. They were trying to advance the underlying objectives by asking hard questions about what would be the most effective way of achieving those objectives.

Despite some of the criticisms Conservative members received for challenging aspects of the bill at second reading, I am pleased to see that the government did, in fact, see fit to accept amendments proposed by Conservatives that substantially improved the bill. I will mention a number of the issues where the mechanisms in place were improved.

The previous version of the bill would have created a situation where harassment complaints that involved MPs' offices would have been investigated under the direction of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. The obvious problem is that the minister is a member of Parliament and a member of a political party, so there would be, if not a lack of good intentions on the part of the minister, at least a potential perception of political bias. There would be a perception, perhaps, that a complaint by a member of the government's office might be treated differently from a potential complaint from within the office of a member of the opposition. We would not want to have either a taint in reality or a taint in terms of the perception of the credibility of that process.

• (1730)

That is why an amendment was proposed and successfully advanced at the committee stage that handed over that investigation to the deputy minister, a non-partisan civil servant. It ensured that the investigations of harassment complaints involving the offices of members of Parliament would be under the authority of a non-

partisan public servant, as opposed to taking place under the direction of the office of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

That was a very important constructive change the Conservatives were able to put forward to make this bill more effective. Fortunately in this case, we saw the process working as it should, and that amendment was accepted.

Another priority for Conservatives on the committee was ensuring a discussion of incorporating mandatory sexual harassment training. That training is critical, and it has been available to MPs. I know many MPs in our caucus have taken advantage of the opportunity to go through that training process as well. That training is important. It is something that we saw needed to be emphasized in the bill, and it was added.

We also put forward an amendment to have a mandatory review of the bill after five years. There has been some discussion in this House around social media and technology, and how that is a new platform on which harassment can take place. Obviously this illustrates the need for periodic reviews and updates, because technology changes. There may be new avenues or new platforms on which harassment takes place, and that may raise new issues in terms of the kind of legislative framework we are going to need going forward.

We have also seen, even over the last five years, increasing awareness and recognition of problems that previously were perhaps not identified and recognized appropriately. We could hope for that continuing process of greater recognition to ensure that everybody in the workplace is properly protected. That update provision was proposed and added and accepted by other members of the committee, and it is very important.

We see the legislative process working well here. Concerns were raised at second reading. We, as a caucus, have done our job. We have put forward constructive improvements to Bill C-65, and many of those have been incorporated.

We will continue to ask questions about ways in which the bill can be improved. Not all of the proposals we put forward were adopted. For example, we had a proposal around clear timelines over which an investigation would take place to ensure that an investigation would not drag out indefinitely and that there would be a process in place to ensure closure for the victim and that these questions are ultimately answered and resolved in a timely manner. Unfortunately, the government members on the committee did not accept that proposal. Recognizing, though, that every proposal we put forward was not incorporated, we still see Bill C-65 as a step in the right direction, a positive step. I am pleased to be supporting it at this stage. It needs to continue to go through the process and hopefully be adopted.

As we work through discussions about processes, we should also acknowledge that changes to processes are not going to solve the whole problem. No matter how many processes and training opportunities are in place, there are always going to be people who will refuse to listen and who are going to think they can get away with it. Sometimes a sense of personal impunity can be a hazard associated with some people in positions of power.

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Therefore it is important, as we confront the issue of harassment as it happens in this environment, that powerful people understand the rules of human conduct that apply to others very much apply to them as well. This needs to be reality reflected in the structure of the system, but it also needs to be absorbed into the minds and hearts of everyone in this place.

From conversations I have had, I know that some feel there is maybe a lack of clarity around what the rules are, in terms of what constitutes harassment and what does not. What this illustrates is a certain inadequacy of a purely rules-based, as opposed to virtue-based, approach to ethics.

A rules-based approach to ethics asks us to define specific lines. When it comes to this and many other things, rigid lines cannot always be easily defined, because there is an objective component to harassment—the behaviour—but there is also a subjective component, in terms of how that behaviour impacted the particular person in light of the context, in light of their situation, in light of cues that may have been given or not, the power structure, and so forth. There is that objective component, and there is the subjective component as well.

• (1735)

An alternative ethical approach, one defined by virtue ethics, is to define qualities of character that should animate action and interaction: a recognition of the dignity and value of every person, a rejection of objectification and the use of people merely as a means, and a commitment to well-being and happiness for all. These are the kinds of qualities that should animate all our interactions.

I am out of time. Thus, we should pass this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to hear that the member will be supporting this legislation. In fact, listening to the debate throughout the day, what I heard was that it is a positive piece of legislation that was well discussed at committee, where we had a good sense of co-operation, with New Democrats and Conservatives working with the Liberal government members to try to improve the legislation. Many amendments were passed as a direct result, and today we have the legislation before us. It is, I believe, a very strong step forward on the issue of harassment.

I would ask the member to talk about the issues of privacy and confidentiality. I wonder if he would add some of his thoughts on that aspect of the legislation.

• (1740)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, this was a piece of legislation that was improved through amendments through a good committee process. That does not mean that it is quite as good as it could have been. There were some good amendments put forward that were rejected. I do not want to imply that we agree completely with the government, but I think this is a constructive step. There are many aspects of the bill that are constructive. There has been clarification on how investigations would take place, on the mechanism, and certainly on provisions for committees to work together to combat harassment in this environment and other environments as well.

There is a great deal here that is positive. Again, we inserted the five-year review so that, if necessary, there would be opportunities to update the legislation, with new legislation sooner than that. However, there is that automatic five-year review in there to continually update it and ensure that the legislative framework is keeping pace with changes that are happening in society and awareness of other issues involving harassment.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my colleagues in the House today for their good work on this important bill.

The one area I would like my colleague to expand on is the one amendment that was not adopted by the committee on the timelines under which an investigation could be conducted. Could he expand on that a bit? That is a concern if this drags on and on. It certainly would put the accused in a very difficult position, as well as the victim.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, we have the principle in general, in law, of people having issues adjudicated in a timely manner. This benefits the victims so that they can have clarity and closure about the way forward. They can feel, to whatever extent it is possible, that there is some degree of justice and response in light of what has happened. It is also for the accused. They can go through and see the results of that process. If there is a restorative process that is possible and a process of education, that can begin to happen as soon as possible.

From all points of the situation, there is an interest in ensuring that these things proceed in a timely manner. That is why the Conservatives saw fit to put forward an amendment to have that timeline provision in place. Unfortunately, it was not accepted by the government. Again, we cannot win them all, especially in opposition.

However, I appreciate the opportunity our members at committee and others had to get the government to see sense in a number of areas, to see the opportunity for improvements, and to bring about those improvements to make Bill C-65 a stronger bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the colleague we just heard from and whose time it is my pleasure to share.

God knows that my hard-working colleague is well known in the House. He always has strong opinions about everything that goes on here in the Canadian political arena, and that is a good thing.

[*English*]

I am very pleased to give my full support to the bill. This is an important piece of legislation, and I am very proud to rise today and talk on behalf of my colleagues and my party to support the bill. We are talking about a very serious issue. We are talking about harassment and even violence here in our precinct, in the House of Commons and the Senate, the Parliament of Canada. If there is a place where we should respect each and every one, it is in the Parliament of Canada. We should be very good on that. We have to be very sincere. We should lead on addressing harassment and violence here in Canada.

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● (1745)

[Translation]

Our party has always supported and will continue to support this bill. That is the case for the government, the second opposition party, and the people of the other parties represented in the House of Commons, and it is done in a spirit of non-partisanship. Just because we are non-partisan does not mean that we say “yes” to everything. On the contrary, our party, and others as well, made changes and proposed amendments because it is vital that this debate be devoid of any political partisanship. I am sometimes partisan. That goes with the job and there is nothing wrong with that. However, in such matters, we must say “no” to partisanship.

Our party's main concern was the protection of victims. In cases of harassment and violence, there is the aggressor and the victim, and either one can be male or female. All too often, the aggressor receives a great deal of attention. However, we must think first and foremost of the victim and of the courage it takes to testify and help ensure that this sad reality is eradicated one day. We can all have our dreams.

What is it about? Let us read the first change to the law, the first subclause of Bill C-65 on harassment and violence. It is rather important because every word matters in laws and especially when a law is on harassment and violence. We have to know the meaning of harassment and of violence. The text of the bill reads:

...means any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment.

With this very clear and very specific definition of harassment and violence, we have a better sense of what we can do when this sad reality occurs in our political world. Before getting into the details of this legislation and the amendments that our colleagues proposed under the guidance of the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, who is our shadow minister for this file, I want to make a distinction.

[English]

As said earlier, it is quite important for the House of Commons to lead on addressing harassment and violence, because we can lead. Just because we are talking about it here does not mean that 500 yards from the Parliament of Canada there is no harassment and no violence. Unfortunately, this tragedy occurs in each and every part of our country. It has no language, no race, no religion, and no age. It is in each and every province. We have to address this difficult situation in every part of the country. We do not have to close our eyes to the reality because unfortunately, the stupidity of mankind has no barriers, no roots, and no language.

[Translation]

It is important to note that, unfortunately, a lot of emphasis, and rightly so, is being placed on the political realm. However, just because we are focusing on our political world, it does not mean that this does not happen elsewhere, and so much the better if the Canadian Parliament leads the way in the fight against harassment and violence.

Let us look at the amendments that our parliamentary group proposed to improve this legislation, which was excellent from the outset and will be even better with the approved amendments. First, we must avoid political interference. We have to understand that the world of politics is a unique place. Indeed, it can be conducive to this type of situation. Why? Because the politician is the boss.

Politicians hold all the power over their employees—professionally speaking, of course. They can fire people on the spot with very little warning. That is part of the political reality. Our schedule is also very unusual, to say the least. In fact, it is not an unusual schedule, but rather there is no schedule. In politics, we are working as soon as we open our eyes in the morning. It is as simple as that. There are not really any clear rules to properly frame the work, since in politics we work 24 hours a day, even more so with today's social media.

I have been politically active for 10 years now, and I often like saying that the thrill of politics is that there are no Mondays. As many people know, going back to work on Monday can be difficult, because everyone is fed up and not very excited about their job. We, however, work seven days a week, so we have no Mondays, and that goes for all the parties. That is a plus, and I am glad to say so. Lastly, we must not forget that these are often young employees in precarious positions. All these factors combined can lead to violence and harassment problems.

I would also like to talk about human nature, which unfortunately is not always pretty. There may be times in our political careers when we experience certain frustrations and things do not go as planned. People who are in a position of authority but are not particularly smart sometimes use that as an excuse to take it out on their staff. It is completely despicable, disgraceful, unacceptable, disgusting, and contemptuous, but it does happen. Since this is an environment where there are no protections, with unusual schedules, where people are young and in precarious situations, unfortunately, some truly reprehensible abuses can occur. However, human stupidity is not exclusively a feature of Canadian politics.

We must therefore avoid political interference and allow for reasonable time frames. It takes time for victims to find the courage, honour, and dignity to lodge a complaint and to do what is necessary. It does not happen immediately. We must understand that this is painful and stressful for these victims. This is why we believe that they should have the time to find the courage to start the process—enough time for this process to play out in a proper, positive, and smart way. This is also why we decided to extend the time limit to file a complaint. Victims cannot always do so right away; they must be given the time.

I now want to talk about mandatory training for all members of Parliament, which is extremely useful. This is a good one. Three weeks ago, I attended a training session with many of my colleagues. It was quite interesting. We were all put into situations to see how we would react. This helped us learn whether a given person would react properly to a given situation. This opened a discussion, and my colleagues shared their thoughts. Sometimes, people shared a personal experience. It caused us all to reflect.

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There is no such thing as a perfect training, of course. It is not like in mathematics, when you have $1 + 1 = 2$ and this never changes. It is not easy to provide training on harassment and violence, but everyone benefits from mandatory training when we all share our own experiences, and this is very good.

Given that cyber-bullying exists and is evolving, whereas it did not exist 10 years ago, it is quite normal to include this sunset clause, which allows for a more in-depth analysis of the situation in five years. It is a great idea and I congratulate my colleague who thought of it. There is greater awareness of harassment over cellphones. We see it, we hear it, we observe it, and we acknowledge it. So much the better. We do not know what technology will be like in five years, but we do know that harassment and violence could still be present in our society. That is why it is important to study this again in five years.

In closing, I am very proud to support this bill and very pleased to participate in this debate. It is quite remarkable to see each and every one of us, from every party, working together to bring forward good ideas and supporting this legislation. In five years, we will have the opportunity to give it new impetus and do our best to eradicate violence and harassment here, in Parliament, and to set an example for all of Canada.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy my colleague's comments related to different pieces of legislation. I do not necessarily agree with all of them, but in this case I do agree in many ways with what my colleague is saying. He says this is not a regionalized problem. It is in fact a national issue, and it has no borders in terms of ethnicity, faith, or any other characteristics. We believe we should be doing more in terms of providing leadership from Ottawa, and we expect other jurisdictions, private, profit, non-profit agencies, to also demonstrate leadership on issues such as this.

Five years from now, we know it will be coming back to us. This is a social issue that continues to grow as the public demand is there. How does the member see the issue continuing to develop, as the public wants us, as legislators, to do more to address this very important and sensitive issue?

• (1755)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to answer a question from my colleague from Winnipeg. Even though sometimes we disagree, we totally agree on this piece of legislation. We also agree that there is strong support from all of us here for the Winnipeg Jets tonight. I hope they will wrap up this thing at home. The hon. Minister of Transport supports me in this case, even if last time we had a debate here, he was worried that his hockey jersey was not the same as mine.

In answer to my colleague, because we are public figures and persons, we are recognized by everyone, so we have to be very careful and exemplary in our process. It is because we get a lot of attention that we have to take this opportunity to send a clear message from coast to coast to everyone, whatever their age, language, race, or religion, to be serious about that. This is a

tremendous opportunity that we can take together to send a clear message to all Canadians that harassment and violence will be no more.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech. His speeches are always funny with a kernel of truth, which is something I really appreciate in the House.

We had the opportunity to examine Bill C-65 and we have talked about its positive aspects. The study was non-partisan, which allowed us to elevate the debate and I am very proud of that. There are now just a few more minutes remaining in the debate of Bill C-65 in the House.

In committee, we had the opportunity to discuss psychological harassment with the Conservatives. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the fact that there is no mention of psychological harassment in the bill. Does my colleague think that it would improve Bill C-65 if the government were to add something about psychological harassment?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, it is always nice to hear from my colleague from Jonquière.

A broken arm is a broken arm, but a broken spirit or psychological wounds can be harder to bear than a broken arm or a scraped leg. Physical wounds heal. However, unfortunately, sometimes the scars from psychological wounds can last a lifetime. That is why it is important to pay even more attention to those suffering from this type of abuse, victims of such misfortune, who in the past or growing up had to deal with psychological abuse and so they were unable to grow and develop as they would have liked because of their psychological pain.

Psychological harassment is a specific type of harassment and violence. It is expressed through people's words, their approaches, their ways of being, the looks they give, their mudslinging, or the way they make a person who is doing his or her best feel inadequate. No one is perfect, but God help those who prey on people who are weaker than them.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if you were to canvass the House, I believe you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

● (1800)

[*English*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is coming up to the middle of May. The boating season in British Columbia has already begun. Therefore, I am here to encourage the government to move forward on its legislation to deal with the long-standing problem of abandoned vessels. These problems are well enumerated.

I know the government has said repeatedly that it shares my commitment to finding a long-standing resolution, a comprehensive, countrywide solution, as most other maritime countries have, in some cases decades ago.

My question is not about the level of the government's commitment. Rather, I am seeking a very specific update on when the government will return Bill C-64 to the House for further debate. It was two months ago that it was returned by committee to the House.

I will also indicate my hope that the reason for the delay in returning the bill to the House is that the minister himself is considering the amendments I proposed at committee, which the Liberal members of the committee voted down. The government is maybe still considering the fine details of those amendments. That is the only reason I can imagine for why the government would not already have the bill back to the House and be moving forward with the next stages of debate and reading stages. We could finally see some resolution, especially for the boaters this summer, who could be out there saying it is great that an abandoned vessel solution was legislated by their federal government. It would build some faith and trust.

Members will remember that the bill was fast tracked by the NDP. It was quite rare to get the unanimous consent of the House to move it to committee so quickly. I was very glad to have been able to initiate that. I was glad that the House agreed, that the transport committee decided to switch its focus from its other business to focus on the study, and that we had so many witnesses who spoke so clearly about the solutions that coastal communities have been advocating. They were in my legislation, Bill C-352, which was blocked by the Liberal-dominated procedure and House affairs committee, and then voted down by Liberal members. It was not even heard in the House. Nevertheless, I tried to transport the elements of that legislation into the minister's bill, Bill C-64.

Therefore, as a reminder on some of those pieces that I hope maybe the minister is considering now, it being the only explanation for why Bill C-64 would be so delayed, is the government now considering bringing into its bill a vessel turn-in program, modelled on the cash for clunkers program? Is it considering creating a dedicated fee to put a fund aside to deal with the backlog of abandoned vessels, since Bill C-64 does not address that backlog? Is the government planning to legislate to formalize the Coast Guard's

role in dealing with abandoned vessels? When that was in former MP Jean Crowder's legislation three years ago, in a previous parliament, all of the Liberal Party voted in support of it, including the now transport minister, fisheries minister, and the Prime Minister. Is the government delaying Bill C-64 so that it can incorporate those coastal solutions into the abandoned vessel legislation?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud to be implementing a comprehensive national strategy to address the issue of abandoned and wrecked vessels.

This strategy, which goes well beyond the proposed wrecked, abandoned, or hazardous vessels act, or Bill C-64, was developed after discussions with a broad cross-section of stakeholders, interest groups, and indigenous communities. These include local communities such as Saanich Inlet and industry associations such as the National Marine Manufacturers Association. It is also based on lessons learned and best practices observed in jurisdictions in the United States such as Washington state.

Bill C-64 is a critical element of the strategy, and we remain committed to bringing it into force as soon as possible. All parties have expressed their support for the legislation, as have numerous witnesses before the standing committee that reviewed this draft bill.

It is past due that a framework be put in place that ensures owners are responsible and liable for their vessels at the end of life.

We are working in partnership with provinces and territories, given their extensive experience and expertise, to explore ways we could enhance the existing pleasure craft licensing system. At the same time, we are studying options to enhance the vessel registry system to increase our ability to hold commercial vessel owners accountable.

Our government has also heard calls from local communities about the need to address the backlog of abandoned and wrecked vessels. This is why in 2017 we fast-tracked the introduction of new programs designed to assist communities across the country in removing and disposing of these problem vessels impacting our communities today.

● (1805)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member did not answer my question so I will ask it in a different way.

If she is so pleased with Bill C-64 and it is so ready to go, why is it stalled again? It has been two months. Communities are demanding a much broader solution than what is in Bill C-64, but nevertheless, let us bring it back to the House and get it done. What could possibly be the explanation? If the bill is in such perfect shape, why not bring it back now?

If the government is going to continue to delay, can the member please assure me that the transport ministry is using this long delay for good purpose and actually inserting the solutions coastal communities asked for into Bill C-64? So far they were all voted down at committee, so I hope the transport minister has a different view.

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Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague that we are committed to moving Bill C-64 forward. In fact, we have heard from some of the communities we have been engaged with that more has been done in two years than in the past 20 years. It took the State of Washington over 10 years to establish its regime. We are striving to establish ours in a much shorter period.

When it comes to abandoned and derelict ships, this government is moving full speed ahead.

I want to assure my hon. colleague that we remain committed to moving Bill C-64 through the parliamentary process and have it come into force as soon as practical. While this is happening, we have and continue to take concrete actions to address the problem of abandoned and wrecked vessels.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on January 29, I rose in the House to ask a question about the EI spring gap, which continues to affect thousands of our constituents. For those who need reminding, the spring gap is when close to 16,000 workers go without an income, some of them for over four months, during the off season because of bad EI reforms instituted by Stephen Harper's Conservative government.

During the last campaign, the Prime Minister promised to reverse the Conservatives' reforms, which penalized seasonal workers and their families. Sadly, the reality today is that nothing has been fixed.

For the past few weeks, the Liberals have been boasting left and right that they fixed the spring gap for seasonal workers. The reality on the ground says otherwise. The government should have taken emergency measures to help seasonal workers. Unfortunately, they decided to offload the spring gap problem onto the provinces. The result is that unemployed workers in eastern Quebec are knocking on doors only to be told that programs do not exist. They are ending up broke and in debt. Is that what the Liberals call fixing the problem?

The Liberals got themselves elected on the promise of fixing the spring gap, so when are they actually going to do it? We can only wonder.

On the ground, groups of unemployed people are worried and rightly so. Last week, Gaétan Cousineau, spokesperson for the Mouvement action chômage Pabok, said that the unemployed in the Magdalen Islands went to their local employment centre to access these measures. They learned that no measure was available because not enough people had signed up. The Minister of National Revenue and hon. member for Gaspésie—les Îles-de-la-Madeleine said that her government had finally fixed the spring gap. In the Lower St. Lawrence, there is currently no program in place and victims of the spring gap are directed to the welfare office. Imagine that.

These people do not need welfare, they need financial support before they resume working. Again, it is the jobs that are seasonal, not the workers. Alain Lagacé, coordinator at Action chômage Kamouraska, said, and I quote, “[The Prime Minister] was elected in eastern Canada on a promise to fix the spring gap. In 35 years as an advocate for the unemployed, I have never seen things so bad.

Workers in the Lower St. Lawrence feel like the Liberals are leaving them high and dry.”

MASSE, the Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi, condemns this situation, and so do we. Simple solutions are available, such as emergency financial assistance for victims of the spring gap, reducing the employment insurance eligibility period to 350 or 360 hours, and providing at least 35 weeks of benefits. Every year, the EI spring gap affects seasonal workers and their families, yet no government, be it Conservative or Liberal, has seen fit to truly reform employment insurance. Unions, groups advocating for unemployed workers, and the NDP have been calling the government's attention to the need for a massive EI overhaul that accounts for the realities of seasonal work. This has been going on for way too long, but so far, nobody seems to be listening to us.

The NDP fully supports the workers and unions who are fighting to get the Liberal government to introduce functional emergency measures to address the situation. Words are no longer enough. It is time for action, time to find a practical, sustainable solution for our 16,000 seasonal workers.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for raising this issue of employment insurance, particularly as it relates to workers in seasonal industries. I am proud to stand before the House and remind my hon. colleague about the good work our government is doing on this front.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to stand before the House and remind my hon. colleague about the good work that our government is doing on this front.

[*English*]

Our EI program delivers approximately \$18 billion in benefits to nearly two million Canadians annually. It is one of the most important programs that make up the core of our social support system. Canadians benefit from an employment insurance program that is dynamic and designed to respond automatically to the changes in an EI economic region's unemployment rate. This helps to ensure that people residing in similar labour markets are treated fairly, with the amount of assistance provided adjusting according to the changing regional economic conditions.

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In regions and communities right across Canada, our EI program is providing income security for our families and workers during periods of unemployment. Since taking office, we have made it our duty to improve the employment insurance program so that it remains relevant for Canadian workers, including seasonal workers, and better corresponds to the reality of today's labour market. For example, we eliminated some of the restrictive EI eligibility requirements for new entrants and re-entrants to the labour force, and we simplified job search responsibilities for the claimants. We also reduced the EI waiting period from two weeks to one week. Shortening this waiting period eases the financial strain for EI claimants at the beginning of a claim, and we expect this move to put an additional \$650 million into the pockets of Canadians annually.

We are also saving Canadians money through reduced EI premiums paid by workers and employers. In fact, the 2017 and 2018 rates are the lowest since 1982. In the fall of 2018, eligible Canadian workers who lose their jobs after several years in the workforce will have more opportunities to upgrade their skills without losing EI benefits.

Most recently, we implemented new EI measures that support Canadian families through more flexible maternity and parental benefits and more inclusive caregiving benefits as well. These improvements came into effect on December 3, 2017, and provide enhanced support for Canadian families.

Furthermore, as part of budget 2018, we are proposing legislation to make the default rules of the current working while on claim pilot project permanent and expand it to sickness and maternity claimants, who currently have their benefits reduced dollar for dollar if they earn income while on benefit claim. The working while on claim rules help claimants stay connected to the labour market by encouraging them to accept available work and earn some additional income while still receiving EI benefits. By working while on claim, seasonal claimants can also accumulate hours toward establishing their next EI claim.

These are just some of the ways we have taken action to improve employment insurance so that more Canadians, including unemployed workers in seasonal industries, get the help they need when they need it.

•(1815)

[Translation]

These are just some of the ways we have taken action to improve employment insurance so that more Canadians, including workers in seasonal industries, get the help they need, when they need it.

[English]

As was announced in budget 2018, we have reallocated \$10 million from existing departmental resources to provide immediate and direct income support and training to affected workers. The government has signed agreements with the governments of the most affected provinces to deliver this funding directly to people, and provinces will have flexibility to deliver a wide range of supports, including career counselling, workplace essential skills training, and associated income supports while on training.

Budget 2018 also proposes to invest \$80 million in 2018-19 and \$150 million in 2019-20 through labour market development

agreements with key provinces to co-develop local solutions that can be tested to support workforce development. These measures will help ensure that unemployed workers in Canada's seasonal industries have access to the supports they need when they need them most.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I think it is high time that the government took responsibility for its actions. Under its dynamic program, 60% of workers do not qualify for EI, and families are going weeks without any money coming in.

We are facing a major problem, and the superficial measures the Liberals have taken so far are not enough. It is time for real action.

I will therefore ask one last time: when will the government finally decide to take action to help seasonal workers and their families, and when will it accept that the training programs are not working? Workers in eastern Quebec have been left to fend for themselves.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that our government has been, and remains, committed to supporting Canadians across the country when they need it and however they need it. We understand how important Canada's employment insurance program is for providing income security for families and workers during periods of unemployment.

[Translation]

We understand how important the employment insurance program is for providing families and workers with income security during periods of unemployment.

[English]

The improvements our government has made to our EI program have strengthened Canada's social safety net for all workers, including workers in seasonal industries right across the country. Important sectors of our economy rely on seasonal labour, and those workers deserve our full support and our continued commitment to ensure their well-being. That is why we will continue to be there for seasonal workers and seasonal industries. It is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do as it creates a stronger economy for all Canadians.

I am proud of our government's work on this front. With the investments we have made in this budget, in next year's budget, and in the budget after that, we are investing well over \$200 million to make sure that workers get the support they need in the way they are asking for it in the regions of this country that are affected when seasonal work is not available in some quarters.

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to see the parliamentary secretary here today. He is the kind of person with whom I would like to have this type of conversation. I have a feeling he and I probably might find a balanced approach to what we need to do with the Canada summer jobs program.

I will start with the question I asked initially when we came back in January of this year, following a very tumultuous and contentious Christmas, when we started to talk about the Canada summer jobs program. I will read the question I asked that day so I can remind members where we were with this conversation. I asked:

Mr. Speaker, despite being forced to settle a constitutional court case regarding Canada's summer jobs last year, the Liberals are attacking the very people they claim to help.

By forcing groups to sign the Prime Minister's values test, the government is denying help to groups that provide aid to refugees, run day camp programs for kids with disabilities, and help at-risk youth. On behalf of these organizations from across Canada, will the Liberals finally remove this values test from the Canada summer jobs application?

That was the beginning of this conversation. When we are in question period, a lot of things are being put out there. However, instead of having a reply, indicating that the Liberals did not think it was the best option to be giving advocacy groups, it was the idea that I would not support the rights of women. It was absolutely ludicrous. With the parliamentary secretary here today, I know we will have a much better conversation and I really expect that. The issue is the discussion that carried on.

On March 1, I had the pleasure of putting forward a motion to the House of Commons, asking the government to fund the Canada summer jobs programs for day cares and for a lot of groups that were doing advocacy for their hometowns, for their communities. We have talked about the day camps. We have talked about helping prepare meals for seniors or coaching a kids' soccer teams I have heard of a lot of Canada summer jobs students who have participated in activities like that. This is really a great program. For years, I worked with the prior member of Parliament for Elgin—Middlesex—London on these programs so know the types of results we had. We had great jobs and great kids coming out of these programs.

However, this year the government decided to put in the attestation. The problem I have is that one day the Liberals are saying no to our faith groups and the next day they are saying yes to our pipeline protestors. It makes no sense. I ask the Liberals to pick a side and go with it. They cannot have both.

Part of the problem is that the Liberals are talking about the attestations and then say they have put in an explanation, that people can sign the attestation because there is an explanation of what the government is doing as long as people are not doing something that is anti-abortion or anti-LGBTQ. The fact is that people are not signing the summary of what they can and cannot do. They are signing an attestation. Many people look at it as a legal document about their beliefs and they cannot attest to that.

Because of all of this, I went back and looked at the community funding for the last 13 and 14 years in Elgin—Middlesex—London. Not one single time did the organizations fund anti-abortion, pro-life, or anti-LGBTQ. However, this year alone 35 different organizations

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did not apply for funding, and the majority of those did not apply because of the attestation. They were against what they thought the government was doing.

Does my hon. colleague believe the Canada summer jobs program should have returned to the old ways or does he think this has become a huge boondoggle because of the attestation?

• (1820)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London. The member mentioned her former boss, Joe Preston, who was a great friend. I now have his office. He and I solved a lot of the world's problems in that office in the last Parliament.

If the member goes back to check on those grant positions, those summer student positions, she would notice that back in 2015 there were about 97 of them. However, last year, there were 209 of them. That is because our Liberal government doubled the investment in summer students, and I think the member can get the math on that.

Our government knows that a strong middle class and a growing economy depend on young Canadians getting the skills and work experience they need to succeed. We have doubled the Canada summer jobs program compared to previous Conservative governments, creating meaningful, paid work experience for almost 70,000 students per year.

I must say that it is a little disappointing that members opposite are spending so much time maybe not giving out all the information on the program, and I would be happy to set the record straight here today.

First of all, the attestation, as outlined in the application guidelines, concerns both the job and the core mandate of the organization. What do we mean by "core mandate"? We mean the primary activities undertaken by the organization that reflect the organization's ongoing services provided to the community. It is not the beliefs of the organization. It is not the values of the organization. I would like to point out that applicants have always been required to outline their organization's mandate and the roles and responsibilities of the job to be funded. This is not a new requirement.

However, what was new this year was that applicants had to attest that both the job and the organization's core mandate respect individual human rights here in Canada. What do we mean by that? We mean the respect of individual human rights, including the rights of women and LGBTQ2 Canadians. That is to say that these rights are respected when an organization's primary activities and the job responsibilities do not seek to remove or actively undermine these existing rights. By including this requirement, we are preventing federal funding from flowing to organizations whose mandates or projects do not respect individual human rights, the values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is as simple as that.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our government has a responsibility to ensure that its policies, programs, and budgets respect and protect human rights. I want to make it clear that, as in previous years, churches, religious groups, and faith-based organizations were encouraged, welcomed, and eligible to apply to the Canada summer jobs program. They add tremendous value to our communities. On this side, we have helped thousands of faith-based groups, not-for-profits and businesses alike, creating just under 70,000 summer jobs. However, this does not require an individual employee in any organization to change his or her beliefs.

We believe that investment in youth is a wise investment, not just for now but for the future, which is why we doubled this investment. I will stand with the government on its actions on this file.

• (1825)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is communication. At the very beginning, it was not the Conservatives who came out about the attestation; it was people in our communities calling us. The Liberal government had to start backpedalling because of the information it had put out there about women's rights, talking about it and actually putting it into the attestation. Was that the right move? Maybe that is something the parliamentary secretary can address. When we know that Canadians do not understand, is it not our job to make sure we accept those phone calls and things like that?

When I was in Cobourg, Ontario, a variety of people came to me saying that their member of Parliament would not answer their calls, write them back, or take their visits. Part of the problem was that nine faith-based organizations in that community did not have the respect of their own member of Parliament to discuss it. We saw the

same thing in London, where constituents in one of the London ridings came to us because the member of Parliament representing that riding stopped answering their calls.

If the parliamentary secretary could help me there, that would be fantastic.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London is an outstanding member of this chamber, and she serves the people of her riding well. I know she has done a tremendous job with parliamentary secretary duties as well.

One thing she knows is that the government will stand up for the rights of all Canadians, rights that were hard fought for and won by many sectors in this country.

When the additional information came forward, that took a great deal of anxiety away. There was anxiety initially. I do not disagree with the member opposite. However, there was clarification. I had 20 faith-based groups receive funding, and this year I am up to 22 groups. There are a couple that have changed for various reasons.

Again, the actions taken by the government both provide opportunity for young Canadians and protect the rights of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

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 6:29 p.m.)

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