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(HANSARD)

Friday, May 11, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 11, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

TRANSPORTATION MODERNIZATION ACT

Hon. Catherine McKenna (for the Minister of Transport) moved:

That a Message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that this House respectfully disagrees with amendments 7(c) and 8 made by the Senate to Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other Acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Trois-Rivières on a point of order.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will be brief. I want us to do the reasonable thing here. I do not see how we can respectfully tell the Senate we reject its amendments without providing an explanation.

That is why I am about to seek the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion recognizing that, for the months—years almost—that we have been debating Bill C-49 here, grain producers and transporters on the ground have been waiting for an answer. That is just to address this aspect of rail transportation. Bill C-49 has quite a few other things going on too, of course.

I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House for the Senate's amendments 7(c) and 8 to Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and other Acts respecting transportation and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, to be now read a second time and concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to once again speak to the several benefits to shippers this historic piece of legislation would provide. Bill C-49 represents a watershed moment for Canada's freight rail sector. It would put in place the right conditions over the long term for a safe, fair, efficient, and transparent freight rail transportation system, for the benefit of all users.

We understand the concerns of captive rail shippers in the Maritimes, but it is critical that we ensure the continued viability and fluidity of the eastern rail network, including through the Montreal area. The proposed amendments from the other place would apply to a significant portion of the tonnage moving on CN's network in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Subjecting this traffic to long-haul interswitching, LHI, could impact the future viability of CN's rail services in eastern Canada, particularly on the northernmost branch line in New Brunswick, where line abandonment has been threatened in the past.

While LHI will not be expanded to allow captive shippers in the Maritimes to access the remedy in Montreal, the bill would make significant improvements to existing remedies that would benefit these same shippers. Shippers in the Maritimes would continue to have access to other shipper remedies contained in the act, many of which would be improved by the bill, including a definition of adequate and suitable rail service; the ability of shippers to seek reciprocal financial penalties in their service agreements; final offer arbitration, FOA; and a new, anonymous dispute resolution service.

Despite the many benefits this bill would provide, some continue to push for further amendments to the final offer arbitration process, a process that is already highly valued by shippers in its current form. However, FOA would already be strengthened under Bill C-49 by allowing shippers to pursue FOA to extend the applicability of an arbitrator's decision from one to two years and by raising the financial threshold for pursuing this streamlined summary FOA process for rate disputes from \$750,000 to \$2 million, therefore allowing more small and medium-size shippers to use this option.

Bill C-49 would also require railways to provide significant new data and performance metrics, including on rates, things that have never been available before. This would improve transparency, which would help shippers in their negotiations with railways.

Government Orders

Under the existing legislation, an arbitrator is already allowed to request technical assistance, including costing and legal assistance. There is nothing in the act that obligates the arbitrator to seek the consent of railways for such assistance, and the arbitrator can hold any failure to disclose information against a railway when coming to a decision.

Bill C-49 would benefit shippers in a variety of ways. In particular, it would enable shippers to seek reciprocal financial penalties; shorten the process for level of service from 120 to 90 days; allow a shipper to extend FOA decisions from one to two years; change the financial threshold for participating in a streamlined arbitration process; make certain temporary agency authorities permanent; recognize the agency's informal dispute resolute authority; and require railways to provide significant new data and performance metrics, including new data on rates. It would also provide agency "own motion" powers to investigate service-level issues in the freight rail system.

Passage of the bill is of the utmost urgency. Grain farmers and shippers are depending on the bill to prepare for the coming harvest season. Many stakeholders, including the likes of the Alberta Wheat Commission, Alberta Barley, the Grain Growers of Canada, and Cereals Canada, have stressed the need for Bill C-49 to be passed before the summer recess. These groups represent hard-working Canadians who are urging parliamentarians to pass the bill expeditiously, and in turn, to fight for them and their livelihoods.

• (1010)

The government and minister have carefully considered the risks, benefits, balance, and impacts of the policies in this bill. The bill has been thoroughly studied and debated for more than a year now in the two chambers. Prior to this, issues were studied by the Canadian transportation review panel, chaired by the hon. David Emerson. There has been an extensive series of additional round tables and consultations. All the input provided by stakeholders and witnesses was shared with the respective panels and committees.

It is clear that the other place wants the same as the government: an effective, efficient, and balanced rail system for the long term. The essential nature of the whole transportation system requires extensive study before changes are made to ensure that we do not end up with unintended consequences that put our system at risk. This study has taken place, and the government has produced a bill that best serves Canadians over the long term. There are many Canadians who will benefit from this bill, and they are eager to see it passed. It is now time to move forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is rather odd that the rush to pass Bill C-49, which I can easily understand, given how many people are waiting for it on the ground, is being hampered by the Liberal government's lack of openness. Instead of accepting a unanimous motion that sought to recognize the senators' work and approve these two amendments, they are making us go back to debate.

If that is what they want, then let us go back to debate. I will repeat my question, focusing on just one of the two amendments proposed by the Senate. History buffs may recall that it must be

12 years or so since we last saw amendments ping-ponging like this between the Senate and the House.

Why are the Liberals refusing to treat all regions of Canada equally, which is the very essence of the Senate's amendment 7(c)?

• (1015)

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about Canada's transportation system, we talk about the need for it to be effective, efficient, fair, balanced, and comprehensive. Sometimes we might think something is a small change, maybe a local issue, but it could actually end up having nationwide consequences.

There has been considerable study, work, and effort put into the policies included in this bill. All those impacts have been taken into account. That is why this balance and an overall view is so important.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the parliamentary secretary's tone. Obviously she has a position she has to peddle in this place. I understand that. I have been a parliamentary secretary.

I am just going to share something with this place. There is nothing more frustrating and more basic to human nature than when we get into an organization and an idea is given to the organization that maybe is contrary to the initial thoughts of that organization. If there is not sufficient buy-in, it will say it is not its idea, and it is therefore going to oppose.

By opposing the amendments from the Senate, which has given thoughtful consideration to those proposals, the parliamentary secretary is, in essence, pushing the burden onto so many farmers, who cannot get their grain moving in sufficient time. This parliamentary secretary and the government are slowing this whole process down. Will they not just admit that the reason they do not support the Senate amendments is that they are not their idea? That is the worst thing we can do for this country at this time.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, knowing how extensive, complicated, and complex transportation systems are across this great country is why we take the time. We need the time to study what the impacts are going to be. What are the advantages and disadvantages? What we are trying to do is create a long-term system that is going to serve Canadians and will provide them with the stability and predictability they need and the flexibility in the future to address challenges that come our way. It has taken a great deal of study to get to this point, and we are confident that we have found the right balance.

Government Orders

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my concern is that at the very beginning of the presentation of this bill, we encouraged the Liberals to remove the freight train portion out of the large omnibus bill. The member says that it is very complicated and that it requires a lot of research and decision-making. The very part that we need for our stakeholders, who help our economy to function, has been slowed down and they are not able to get their products to port. Now we see the Liberals delaying again.

Why did the Liberals not take that initiative at the very beginning and ensure our freight was available to agriculture, natural resources, and manufacturing across the country?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, it comes back to the idea that we do not look at a transportation system in single elements. It has to be a comprehensive, integrated system. If we only gets one piece of the puzzle right but the rest of it does not function, we have not made any progress. That is what we have tried to do.

We have tried to look at this from a comprehensive point of view and ensure the entire system is integrated. There are some gaps, there are some choke points. We will continue to work on that to ensure it works properly coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative MP spoke on the fact that we had offered earlier to split out those provisions of the bill, and that would not have changed anything in those sections. That would have just accelerated it.

The parliamentary secretary cannot have it both ways. The Liberals cannot say that we need to study and understand and that everything needs to be integrated, when we offered to see their proposal move forward so we could give certainty to those grain farmers who need this right now. Why are they so opposed to working with anyone except themselves?

• (1020)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, again, it is important that we do the study and look at each element of the overall transportation system, but we cannot just do it in isolation. We have to figure out how it connects into the system as the greater whole, and that is what we have done. We have tried to look at things in isolation so we can get into the depth and into the detail to ensure we understand it properly. Then we need to look at the overall system and ensure that it is all integrated, that it fits together, and that it provides the kind of fluidity in our transportation system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague when she says that it is important to do all the necessary studies. However, we disagree beyond that, because I feel that the only studies the minister seems to listen to are those proposed by the government.

The parliamentary committee and the Senate might as well be working in a vacuum. They spent months studying this issue and hearing witnesses and relevant testimony on all of these matters. They are proposing carefully crafted amendments that pinpoint or illuminate specific factors that the government may have overlooked in its haste.

Why is the government refusing outright to approve the two remaining amendments? In this legislative ping-pong match, these are the two amendments the Senate is insisting on passing. Coincidentally, they are also amendments that were proposed by the opposition parties during the committee study.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, the government has accepted amendments from the parliamentary committee and from the other place, and when possible, we do. However, the long-term study of the transportation system of Canada has been going on for years. We have experts who come to committee, we have experts who testify, and we also have experts within the department itself. They have studied all the amendments that have come forward. They have put it against their own experience and their expertise. It is those recommendations on which we will move forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our farmers and producers have been waiting for this legislation for years. It is long overdue. It would help move our commodities. In particular for me, coming from the Prairies, our wheat is so very important. When I sat in opposition, we waited and we challenged the Stephen Harper government to materialize on it, and it never did. We have.

Could my colleague comment on how important important it is that we deliver this legislation in a timely fashion?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear when we listen to the many stakeholders who have been very vocal about this. Alberta wheat, Alberta barley, the grain growers, and Cereals Canada have all expressed, very clearly, how important it is to get Bill C-49 passed as soon as possible.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to mention the great hockey win last night by the Winnipeg Jets. It is good to see that team move on. Las Vegas will be an interesting challenge.

In recognition also of today, I dug deeply into my closet and found my railroad tie, which I am proud to wear today. My closet of ties is very extensive.

I rise today to speak to the government's second motion regarding the Senate's amendments to Bill C-49, the transportation modernization act.

It has frankly taken too long. It is ridiculous that the Liberal government has taken so long to pass the bill. Just like the first response by the government to the Senate's amendments, this second motion by the government will further delay the bill's passage.

It might be a little strange for me, a Conservative opposition MP, to say I want the government to pass its own bill, but that is exactly the case. The Liberals had another opportunity to do it this morning. It is the Liberals who are delaying the passage of Bill C-49, as they voted against doing it this morning.

This message that the Liberals are delaying the passage of Bill C-49 is going to be the theme of my speech this morning, because it is the truth.

Government Orders

I would like to go back in time to September 2017. I had the opportunity to join the House of Commons transportation infrastructure and communities committee for a number of full days of witness testimony on Bill C-49 in the week prior to the House returning for our fall session. During the days of witness testimony, we heard from many witnesses that the bill needed amending. These calls for amendments were frequent and, in many cases, repetitive among certain stakeholder groups.

My Conservative colleagues on the transportation committee and my NDP friend the member for Trois-Rivières heard these calls and put forward a number of small reasonable amendments as called for by the stakeholders, whose industries and businesses represent billions of dollars to the Canadian economy. Had the Liberals not been so politically stubborn, they might have accepted those amendments that my Conservative and NDP colleagues put forward at that committee.

They would have been better off to do so because once the bill made its way to the Senate transportation and communications committee, many of those same amendments were introduced at the Senate committee. It is worth noting that many of these amendments were supported by senators of all political stripes, including hon. senators from the recently formed independent senators group.

The first delay of Bill C-49 by the Liberals was the rejection of the very reasonable opposition amendments at the House of Commons committee, recommended by the many witnesses.

The second delay by the Liberals to Bill C-49 was how long they took to decide what they would do with the Senate's amendments. The Senate sent its message to the House of Commons on April 16. Farmers, agriculture groups, as has been mentioned by the parliamentary secretary, and Canada's manufacturing, mining, and forest industries had to wait two weeks to find out what the government would do with these amendments. For two whole weeks it dithered on what to do.

The third way the government delayed passage of the bill was by rejecting many of the Senate's amendments. When the government finally revealed its position on the Senate's amendments, shippers in these important industries were very disappointed with what they saw, not just because the government weakened or rejected amendments they felt were important but because they knew this move by the government would cause further delays to the passage of Bill C-49.

Instead of agreeing with all the Senate's amendments, which would have resulted in quickly sending the bill off for royal assent, the government chose to do a mixture of accepting a few amendments, amending a few others, and rejecting the majority of them.

My colleague the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, who is doing an excellent job of holding the transport minister to account, proposed an amendment to the government's motion to accept all the Senate's amendments. Had the House adopted my colleague's amendment, the bill would have gone immediately for royal assent thereby speeding up the passage of Bill C-49. However, shock of all shocks, the Liberals delayed their own bill one more time and voted against my colleague's amendment.

● (1025)

I think that brings it to four times that the Liberals have delayed the passage of Bill C-49 in the last six months. Should I say that the Liberals are not done? Here we are again. The Senate has dealt expeditiously with the government's motion, and members of the other place have voted to insist on two of their amendments, which the government previously rejected. Today, we are debating a motion by the Liberal government to once again reject amendments that the Senate has been insisting on.

Who is causing the delay in passing Bill C-49? It is the Liberals. If they would simply accept these two Senate amendments, we could pass this bill today and send it for royal assent, as was proposed earlier in this session. However, that is not going to happen, because of the Liberals. Bill C-49 will have to go back to the Senate, and we do not know what is going to happen in that other place. This situation is entirely the Liberals' own fault. It is the Liberals who are causing the delays in the passage of Bill C-49.

The delays to the passage of Bill C-49 that I just highlighted are only the ones that have happened since September 2017. For a minute or two, I would like to jump back further in time and briefly discuss the delays caused by the Liberal government that started years ago. Conservatives know that the rail transportation system is vital to the economic well-being of our country's economy, and one of the founding principles that got Confederation to work. However, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport have been dragging their heels in addressing the serious needs of our country's economy.

Back in 2014, then minister of transport, the member for Milton, launched a statutory review of the Canada Transportation Act, a year early, following what was a very trying year for Canada's shippers, particularly in the Prairies. The report that came from this review is known as the Emerson report, after David Emerson, the head of the commission. Mr. Emerson spent over a year consulting with industry stakeholders before writing his report, which is a lot of consultation. After the Emerson report was presented to the current Minister of Transport in December 2015, the minister took an additional year to consult on the consultations before finally introducing Bill C-49 in May 2017, over 14 months later. From the very start of the Liberal government, the transportation needs of our country have not been a priority.

At this time, I would like to switch my focus and talk about the substance of the two amendments being rejected by the Liberal government.

The first amendment I would like to discuss is the Senate's amendment regarding final offer arbitration. The laws and regulations governing the relationship between the railway and the rail shipper are quite complex, so I would like to quote from an analysis prepared for the Mining Association of Canada with respect to the final offer arbitration amendment. This analysis was done after the government unveiled its first motion regarding the Senate's amendments, but the points it makes are just as valid now, as we are dealing with the same amendment.

It states:

Government Orders

The motion tabled by the Minister of Transport not only rejects the Senate amendment, but further enhances railway market power over captive shippers. Rather than retaining the status quo, the motion asks the House to give credibility to an interpretation that (a) contradicts what Canadian courts have said about the FOA remedy and (b) further tilts the current imbalance in the FOA remedy in favour of the railways. The Minister's support for Class I railways inflicts additional harm on those few shippers who are permitted to access final offer arbitration (FOA). The Senate amendment would have entitled a shipper to obtain a determination of the railway's cost of transporting its goods to assist an arbitrator in FOA to determine whether to select the offer of the carrier or the shipper. Now, the Minister has publicly declared that FOA is not a cost-based remedy but "rather a commercially-based process to settle a dispute during a negotiation of a confidential commercial contract". There are at least four things wrong with this statement:

- (1030)

First, the Federal Court of Appeal (and the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench) declared FOA to be a form of rate regulation and an arbitrator appointed under FOA to be a regulatory authority. Ignoring the courts, the Minister has adopted the losing position of the railways before the courts.

Second, railways can now quote the Minister in support of their position, that costs have nothing to do with rates. While the average businessperson will understand this statement to be incorrect, arbitrators will be asked to take it into account. Shippers who are already exposed to daunting odds in the use of FOA, will face yet another hurdle.

Third, nothing in the FOA remedy requires the outcome to be a negotiated confidential commercial contract. Whether a railway accepts a contract on the terms set out in an FOA award is 100% up to that railway. Because it can transport the goods under tariff, a railway does not have to enter into a contract.

Fourth, by failing to accept the Senate amendment, the Minister is condoning the railways' efforts to undermine the viability of the FOA remedy as a means of challenging rates and conditions of service that railways can impose unilaterally. The Senate amendment would have allowed a shipper to compare rates offered by the railway to rates that would prevail under conditions of effective competition. Instead the government motion will entrench the railways' market power or dominance over shippers who must use the railway to which they are captive for all or part of their shipments to domestic markets.

That is strange. What a process this is.

Thousands of Canadian jobs rely on the mining sector. The mining sector relies on a stable, reliable transportation system to get its products to the customers or to the coast.

I could include other quotes from experts and stakeholders regarding the importance of this amendment, but for the sake of time I have left them out.

Canada needs a fair and balanced relationship between its rail shippers and its class I railways. It is sad that the government is deaf to calls for a better balance in this important relationship.

I would also like to take a minute to talk about the second amendment the Senate is insisting on. This amendment would allow captive shippers in the Maritimes access to the long-haul interswitching remedy that this bill would make available to shippers in other parts of Canada.

Why are the Maritimes being excluded? If this remedy is needed in other parts of Canada, as the government insists, why is it not needed in the Maritimes? To phrase the question another way, why must captive Maritime shippers be forced to pay higher shipping costs? Treating Maritimers as unequal partners may be the Prime Minister's definition of co-operative federalism, but it is not ours.

I hope that some of my hon. colleagues on the other side of the House who come from the Maritimes will ask the Minister of Transport why their constituents and the industries that support their communities are not worthy of this same remedy.

I will close by reiterating a point I made earlier in my speech.

The Conservatives know that the rail transportation system is absolutely vital to the well-being of Canada's economy, and that it is these two rails of steel that hook our country together and have made our economy strong. Regrettably, I am not sure the Liberals do. Despite what the Liberals say, their actions do not match their words.

Stakeholders we are hearing from are not pleased with this bill. Some stakeholders say that this bill would make things even worse. Others say it would make things a little better, but it could have been much better.

This morning, we are discussing a government motion to reject reasonable Senate amendments to Bill C-49. This move by the government is delaying the passage of its own bill one more time, as it did this morning.

In 2019, Canadians will have the opportunity to judge the Liberal government and replace it with a Conservative government that will listen to stakeholders and respect the important role transportation plays in the Canadian economy.

- (1035)

[*Translation*]

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

I cannot help but agree with him about the Liberals' lack of consistency. He mentioned several times in his speech that they are always saying how urgent it is to take action while at the same time creating obstacles and holding up the bill every step of the way to make sure the process takes longer. Obviously, the government is being inconsistent.

I wanted to ask a question about the two small amendments that we talked about this morning. Only those amendments, along with the adoption of the motion I moved earlier, could have ensured that the bill went directly for royal assent, rather than continuing to be stuck in the back and forth between the Senate and the House.

Does my colleague believe that one of the two Senate amendments sought to establish a balance of power between farmers and our two major railways when it comes to the negotiation of contracts on the delivery price for grain or other products? Let's be honest, although these railways are a duopoly, they basically have a monopoly.

- (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his input at committee.

Why they do not is a darn good question. The amendments make sense. That final offer arbitration, where the railways can just say 100% that they would not buy into this, makes no sense.

Government Orders

I really do not get the issue with the interswitching for the Maritimes. If people can see what rates they will be charged, in order to make a decision, that would make sense. Why are the Liberals excluding the Maritimes from this, when the rest of Canada has some options to choose from? It is beyond me why they would exclude the Maritimes from that.

These are very small amendments, and they were two of the issues that the witnesses who testified talked about. The final offer arbitration was talked about extensively, and how challenging the former process was, yet the railways can opt out 100%. It makes no sense.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated listening to the member for Bow River and his rational, reasonable, common sense question of why in the world we are where we are today, when this issue could have been dealt with months ago.

On behalf of stakeholders across my riding and across Canada, we asked the government to please take out the portion with regard to freight and deal with it separately, deal with it quickly, because we all know how important this is to agriculture, mining, and manufacturing.

The Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act had been put in place to deal with an issue and look further down the road to see how well it worked. It worked so well that, right across the country, there was an ask for a buy-in so that all these shippers would be able to use that same type of process. However, the current government absolutely refused to go in that direction. As a result, the Liberals have delayed the shipping of products for our economy to our coasts over and over again by removing amendments, not working with the committee, and not working with the Senate.

The Liberals are claiming that they want the bill to pass quickly, but their actions absolutely have not matched their words. By opposing the Senate amendments, they are ignoring our stakeholders and delaying the passage of their own bill, Bill C-49.

Why are the Liberals delaying the passage of their own bill?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her understanding of the long history of the issue of rail on the Prairies, which is such a critical piece.

As she mentioned, there was a piece of legislation that was in place up until 2015. The government had options. It could have extended that legislation temporarily for one or two years while it studied and consulted, but it did not. The Liberals could have extended it, but they let it die. They could have taken our ask to split it out. I understand that transportation is a complicated piece. However, on transportation with rail, and the pieces we need, the Liberals could have done that. We would have supported them on that. We would have worked with them to get it done. They chose not to take our offer, so that delayed it again.

I have no problem with consultation, but the Liberals continue this process back and forth between here and the other place, while reasonable amendments, like the two this morning, are rejected. Those are good amendments that came from stakeholders in the Emerson report, and from their consultations. As of this morning,

those are two simple amendments that could have been added to make the bill work better.

Again, I do not know why.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. For years I sat in opposition and I remember the efforts from the member for Wascana, today's Minister of Public Safety, who was constantly asking the government in different ways why we were not protecting our commodities, our suppliers, and our grain farmers in the prairies. He asked when we would see the legislation.

For years, Stephen Harper did absolutely nothing on the file. Within a couple of years, we have now advanced the file. We have good, solid legislation, and now we have the Conservatives saying we should have done this or that. They had 10 years to do it, and they failed. They did not get the job done. Now we have the legislation before us. It is good legislation. The stakeholders, for the most part, are supportive of it. Why do they not just accept a good thing and allow it to continue to go through?

• (1045)

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the wealth of knowledge and the way our colleague speaks to us. I appreciate the time he gives, and he gives it often. He knows I also appreciate his Winnipeg Jets.

The former minister, Mr. Ritz, did take action, and he did put changes in under the Conservative government, which relieved the situation. That was a piece of legislation that worked extensively and could have continued on.

The Emerson report was done under the Conservative government, and the consultation was there. It was an excellent report that was placed into the minister's hands on the other side. There was a lot of information there.

What was turned down again this morning were two amendments. These were amendments that our witnesses, the organizations, have asked about. There may be many good parts in the bill, but those two amendments would have made it better. As for the suggestion that we cannot propose amendments that improve legislation, that the Liberals have all the answers, there was an example of two amendments that could have made that legislation better.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his well-thought-out and wise speech. I know he comes from an area where the energy sector is really important, and he knows I come from an area where manufacturing and exporting are really important.

Government Orders

We heard the Prime Minister repeat over and over again that he wants to phase out the oil and gas sector. He did that most recently a few weeks ago in Europe. He also said during the election that he wants to transition away from manufacturing. I wonder if my colleague could comment on the rail sector and its importance to our competitiveness. We all know our transportation system is extremely integrated, but by not passing this bill when they had opportunity again today to just pass it, but did not, it seems like the Liberals are slowing things down. I wonder if my colleague could say what kind of domino effect this is going to have on our transportation system and our ability to compete internationally, especially at a time like this.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned manufacturing and resources, oil and gas. My particular riding has the four largest irrigation districts in Canada. It produces many of the niche crops that we export. Grains are important, but we produce many niche crops as well. We are also putting a lot of oil in railcars in my riding, and then there is manufacturing. People would be surprised to learn there is a lot of manufacturing in my riding. The suitcase someone picks up from a luggage rack at an airport was probably made in my constituency. Clearly, the number of different things that need to be moved by rail is extensive.

That is why we need a fair market in the rail system. We need to understand what the costs of rail are, to have interswitching in the Maritimes so people can see what their costs are and to have final arbitration that actually works and does not allow the railways to just opt out of it if they do not like it. That does not make any sense to me.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have 10 minutes to begin his speech before statements by members and another 10 minutes after question period.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for that information.

I would like to begin by saying that I am not a big fan of the Winnipeg Jets, unlike my colleague who spoke before me. I must admit, however, that after their win last night, knowing they are the only Canadian team still left in the running for the Stanley Cup, I was actually happy for them. It would be great to bring the Stanley Cup back to Canada, hockey being our national sport and all. That is the end of my comments on hockey. Let us get back to Bill C-49.

Mr. Speaker, you said I will not have my entire speaking time before question period. I want you to know right away that I have deliberately chosen not to use all of my time, if only for the sake of consistency when we are talking about the urgent need for action, while the Liberals insist on just talking.

This is about consistency, and I hope there is also some symbolic value here, since one cannot speak from both sides of one's mouth at the same time. One cannot suggest, as I did with my motion here this morning, to return Bill C-49 for royal assent as soon as possible by accepting the two minor amendments that remained out of the ones proposed by the Senate and, at the same time, launch into these endless, long-winded speeches on a bill that will have a real impact on the ground for those who are waiting for this to be resolved, one way or another.

I would like the Hansard to reflect the reasons why senators are insisting on these two amendments to which the Liberal government has unfortunately closed the door.

The message is that the House respectfully refuses the amendments, but I fail to see any respect in all this, except perhaps for the wording of the message. What did the senators send us as justification for insisting on these two small amendments?

I will read their reasoning, not only because I agree with it, but also because I believe that it is important to put it on the record. Why was the Senate so emphatic about its amendment? Let me quote the Senate:

That the reasons for the Senate's insistence on its amendment 7(c) be:

"because all regions of Canada should be treated equally, with fairness and respect. ...because shippers in the Maritimes will continue to have access to other shipper remedies in the Act. As the proposer of the Senate amendment pointed out in committee, this is unfair for the maritime region, since there are roads and therefore other modes of transportation in areas like Prince Rupert and northern Quebec where an exemption is provided."

The House no doubt knows that NDP members are not huge fans of the Senate, and especially an unelected Senate, but since this is the way things are for now, I must recognize a job well done.

It is not true that the only job of an opposition party or member is to oppose everything, all the time. I remind members that an opposition member's job is not to oppose everything, but to point out things that could be improved in a bill, to make it as close to perfect as possible. Every bill can be improved upon, and the government that sets the legislative agenda should be open to amendments that make sense. These amendments did not pop up out of nowhere. They are the result of discussions with experts in House committees and parliamentary committees.

I want to talk about another reason why the Senate asked and insisted that its amendment no. 8 be recognized, and I say "asked" because we now know that this request has been denied. I want to share the following quote from the Senate:

That the reasons for the Senate's insistence on its amendment 8 be:

"because this amendment entitles a shipper to obtain a determination of the railway's cost of transporting its goods to assist an arbitrator in final offer arbitration to determine whether to select the offer of the carrier or the shipper. By declaring that final offer arbitration is a commercially based process and not cost-based, the House of Commons has removed that entitlement from the shipper;"

Statements by Members

●(1050)

That explanation is as clear as can be, and it is indisputable. Anyone who has negotiated a contract or a collective agreement under arbitration knows that the parties are more likely to reach a fair agreement when there is a balance of power. If Bill C-49 makes that impossible, it is obvious which party stands to benefit the most. The purpose of the amendment was to restore a level playing field and ensure that the arbitrator making the final decision will have the tools to make an informed decision in the event that the process does come to fruition. Even that idea was rejected by the Liberal government.

In light of this morning's decision to reject the amendments, it is once again very clear that the Liberal government is always trying to cozy up to big business, which I imagine can be very generous when it is time to fill the campaign coffers. I suppose I could be wrong, but I will leave it up to everyone to observe the political game-playing. Later today, we will be debating Bill C-76, which is about new election rules. There again we will see how the Liberals want voters to make decisions based on money instead of the various parties' development philosophies. I will have more to say about Bill C-76 later. I will leave it at that for now.

I quoted the Senate's explanations so that they appear in the *Hansard*, but since I have a few minutes left, I would like to point out everything that this bill does not do. The matter of contracts is urgent, but so is the development of a passengers' bill of rights, which air travellers have been waiting for for years. In the previous Parliament, the NDP tabled a document—it was not even a bill—that sought to examine the possibility of putting regulations in place before the next election as the minister saw fit, but I would be willing to bet that the Liberals will wait until just a few months before the 2019 election is called to introduce the passengers' bill of rights.

It is clear that this government is not here to serve its constituents but to further its election strategy. Meanwhile, all this time, Canadians have been waiting for a real passengers' bill of rights that would ensure that they are compensated in situations like the one we saw here in Ottawa with Air Transat only a year ago. The passengers' bill of rights is also long overdue. When Bill C-49 finally receives royal assent, we will still not have a passengers' bill of rights. All we will have is the first step in a process to develop a bill of rights in the future.

Bill C-49 is absolutely unbelievable. If the Liberals wanted to take quick action on grain transportation, they could have done so. Let us remember that, at the beginning of the process, we proposed dividing Bill C-49 to quickly examine the aspects that addressed grain transportation, but this government refused to do that. We also proposed to extend the measures taken by the previous Conservative government so that farmers would not be left in limbo when the temporary measures ended and before Bill C-49 came into effect.

There are many causes for concern with this bill, and we cannot understand why the Liberal government is not more open to the amendments that are being proposed.

●(1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Trois-Rivières will have 10 minutes remaining when we resume debate following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[Translation]***DENIS GRENIER**

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today it is with pride and emotion that I have the pleasure of welcoming to Ottawa a great man from the North Shore, Denis Grenier. He is the president and founder of Cancer Fermont, and I wish to pay tribute to him.

For more than a decade now, this man, an undeniable leader, a creative and vibrant visionary whose tenacity and generosity are legendary, has been working tirelessly day and night without expecting anything in return other than the well-being of our community.

In the remote northern community of Fermont, Mr. Grenier collects donations every year to make life a little bit easier for the people of Fermont struggling with cancer. These donations pay for the patients' immediate needs, such as making treatment accessible, reuniting families, and making dreams come true.

I hope that more great men and women in other communities will be inspired by the shining example set by Cancer Fermont.

On behalf of everyone in Manicouagan, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Mr. Grenier.

* * *

●(1100)

*[English]***MCHAPPY DAY**

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate McDonald's Canada on its 25th celebration of McHappy Day.

Headquartered in my riding of Don Valley East, McDonald's Canada has been committed to giving back to the community in which it operates. Each year more than 1,400 McDonald's restaurants across the country celebrate McHappy Day. Since its inception, the event has raised over \$66 million for Ronald McDonald House charities and other local children's charities across Canada.

The 15 Ronald McDonald Houses provide out-of-town families with a home to stay in while their child is being treated at a nearby hospital.

I thank all who have participated in a McHappy Day. Their support will help families and will further heighten public awareness of the critical role of family-centred care.

CALGARY ZOO

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one need not travel to Madagascar to watch lemurs leap, nor go to Antarctica to see penguins plunge. These creatures and many more thrive at the Calgary Zoo, where lasting contributions to species conservation are made every day.

The zoo is renowned for its work in protecting endangered species. Its biologists specialize in the science of species reintroduction and have restored black-footed ferrets to Canada, reintroduced nationally extinct swift foxes, bolstered the greater sage grouse population, and won awards for protecting endangered whooping cranes.

Just this week, the Calgary Zoo also became the place to watch pandas play. The pandas Er Shun and Da Mao and their cuddly cubs have taken up residence in a special habitat designed to meet their every need.

Canada is fortunate to have the experts at the Calgary Zoo contributing to species recovery teams and working toward wildlife conservation at home and around the world.

* * *

[Translation]

NEUROFIBROMATOSIS

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 17 is World Neurofibromatosis Awareness Day. Although neurofibromatosis is the most common neuro-genetic condition, many people are still not familiar with it. More than 10,000 Canadians live with this disease, which affects the skin and the nervous and skeletal systems.

I commend the hard work of organizations such as the Association de la neurofibromatose du Québec, which brings together people diagnosed with this disease, including those in my riding, Hull—Aylmer.

On Thursday, all around the world, communities will light up their major buildings in blue and green to raise awareness of neurofibromatosis. Many cities in Canada will do the same.

On May 17, and all year long, let us support those living with neurofibromatosis.

* * *

RÉAL LAFLAMME

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House to pay tribute to Réal Laflamme, a recognized leader in the agricultural community and throughout Quebec.

Farming in the Laflamme family is a tradition that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Mr. Laflamme has made a tremendous contribution to the development of the Société d'agriculture de Saint-Hyacinthe, an undeniable asset for our region, as well as on the provincial, national, and international scenes in both sports and agriculture.

Mr. Laflamme, a well-known agricultural entrepreneur, has been a long-time advocate for and ardent defender of supply management.

Statements by Members

His efforts have earned him induction into the Quebec Agriculture Hall of Fame as well as the Ordre national du mérite agricole.

Mr. Laflamme has been active in the co-operative movement in Quebec, with Comax, the Coop fédérée, and the SOCODEVI. He has also served as an administrator with the Société de financement agricole du Québec, the Saint-Hyacinthe Agricultural and Food Exhibition, and the Salon de l'agriculture. He is still very active in a number of strategic projects for our region.

On behalf of everyone in Saint-Hyacinthe and Acton Vale, I thank Réal Laflamme for his dedication.

* * *

LAURENTIDES—LABELLE

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, spring is finally here, but its late arrival has caused many riverside residents a lot of stress.

In my riding of Laurentides—Labelle, rivers like the Rouge, Lièvre and Nord rivers have burst their banks, causing considerable damage.

My thoughts are with everyone across the country who is dealing with flooding. It is important to be ready to react in any emergency. On April 14, I got to observe an exercise involving a simulated medical emergency in Amherst. The members of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve 51 Field Ambulance, first responders from Arundel and Amherst, firefighters from the northwest Laurentians fire department, air cadets from 716 Laurentien squadron, and municipal and regional authorities all worked together efficiently and compassionately. It was a privilege for me to see them at work.

No one ever wishes for disasters to happen, but if one does, Laurentides—Labelle is ready.

* * *

●(1105)

[English]

SANDY MITCHELL

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the Durham region is mourning the loss of one of our most inspiring citizens. Sandy Mitchell was born with cerebral palsy, yet spent a lifetime defying the label of disabled with incredible accomplishments.

He was a three-time equestrian Paralympian who competed into his sixties and founded the Windreach Farm in Ashburn almost 30 years ago. Sandy dedicated his life and earnings to helping other Canadians achieve great things in the face of adversity.

Sandy and the amazing team at Windreach have helped thousands of families heal, learn, and grow their confidence. Windreach is a welcome place to all. It helps people with autism and a range of physical and intellectual disabilities. In partnership with Wounded Warriors Canada and Can Praxis, I was proud to join Sandy and the Windreach team as they launched the equine therapy program for veterans and their families.

Statements by Members

When he was made a member of the Order of the British Empire, even the Queen recognized how remarkable Sandy Mitchell was. However, what is most special to our community is that Sandy always saw the potential in everyone. What an incredible legacy.

* * *

MOTHER'S DAY

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize all mothers whom we will be celebrating on Sunday. It will be my first Mother's Day without my mom. She worked side by side with my father for years, building a successful farming operation while sharing the raising of the 10 of us.

From the moment we are born, our mothers help us through the difficult times and help us achieve our accomplishments. I would like to recognize my wife Pam, who not only did a wonderful job to help raise our four children, but also worked beside me on the farm and in politics. She now continues to help raise our six beautiful grandchildren.

When I look at my daughters, Mieka and Bethany, and my daughter-in-law Natalie, I see the new challenges young moms face and the strength they have to overcome these challenges. They work tirelessly for long hours in their jobs and at home to raise their children.

I would like to especially recognize the moms in Cape Breton for their hard work, compassion, and grit they give children to succeed.

I ask my colleagues to please join me in celebrating mothers across Canada: the ones who are with us now, the ones who have gone before us, and the mothers of tomorrow.

* * *

ALLAN LING

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to honour a lifelong friend and pre-eminent farm leader, Allan Ling, who passed away recently.

Allan, a farmer, was a tireless advocate for the farming industry. Beginning with 4H, he then organized and served with the National Farmers Union, became chair of PEI Grain Elevators Corporation, worked with the PEI Agri-Alliance, and was the long-serving president of the Atlantic Grains Council. Added to this work was his work with the horse racing industry. He was one of the founding organizers of the Grain Growers of Canada, the umbrella organization that brought together industry players from across the country.

There was not a federal minister since Eugene Whelan's time or a provincial premier since the seventies whose ear Allan had not bent on everything from research to marketing.

He served his community in many ways, but first as a first responder. For Allan, there were no strangers, only friends he had yet to meet.

His greatest joy, though, was family: his wife Jan, children, and grandchildren. Our condolences to all.

RABBI OF BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that during Jewish Heritage Month I rise to recognize the incredible impact my friend Rabbi Daniel Friedman has had on the community of Edmonton and Canada. Rabbi and Rabbanit Friedman will be taking their family to London, England, after many years of service at Beth Israel Synagogue in my riding of Edmonton West.

Rabbi Friedman has led a remarkable life dedicated to serving his community and his faith since he was 21. At just eight years old, when he was asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he said that he wanted to be the first rabbi on the moon. While he certainly is a star, he has yet to be among them, but we love him anyway.

He is a recipient of the Alberta Centennial Medal and an active member of countless Jewish youth groups across the continent. He was also a driving force behind getting the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa built.

I thank Rabbi Daniel and Rabbanit Batya for all the work they have done for Beth Israel Synagogue, for Edmonton and Canada, and for their friendship. I have no doubt they will make a lasting impact across the pond in England.

* * *

● (1110)

[Translation]

LAFLECHE OPTIMIST CLUB

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 28, I joined the members and friends of the Laflèche Optimist Club to celebrate its 50 years of involvement and engagement in the Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne community.

The Optimist Club runs programs and activities to fulfill its mission to support the youth of Laflèche, and I would say mission accomplished. Thanks to the generosity and commitment of its volunteer members, the club has made generations of young people feel valued.

That is why I was tremendously proud to award certificates of recognition to Yvon Nadeau, Jean-Guy Plante, Albert Robillard, and Jacques Roy, four founding members who are still involved in the cause after all these years. On behalf of the youth of Laflèche, I want to offer them my congratulations and thanks, and I hope the next 50 years are just as full of hope and optimism.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mental Health Week is an ongoing reminder that there are many in our communities, young and old, who suffer in silence every day.

[Translation]

This year, my youth council chose to make mental health a priority in our work. We are determined to encourage members of our community to speak openly about their experiences and to listen to others, so that they do not suffer in silence.

Statements by Members

[English]

In conjunction, our government has invested over \$450,000 in mental health-related programs right in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, such as Routes, run by the CMHA, which serves at-risk individuals and youth through expressions of art, culture, and other programs. Our government and our community are committed to continuing to raise our voices.

Together we can fight stigma and help everyone live better and healthier lives. Let us keep talking.

* * *

GEORGE MARSLAND

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, George Marsland was one of the most infectious, energetic, and enthusiastic people anyone could ever meet. Born in New Hamburg, Ontario, George would go on to study law at Western. Soon afterward, he caught the attention of Brian Mulroney's leadership campaign team and was eventually tapped as a staff member in the Prime Minister's Office.

“George was an individual of good counsel and goodwill, whose strong contribution to the growth and success of the PC Party should be underlined and remembered”, said Prime Minister Mulroney this week.

George also held senior roles at Magna International, where I met him. George loved people, and they loved him back. That is why so many were so saddened to learn of his passing just recently. I among those who were saddened to learn this news. He was my friend.

We will remember his boundless energy, his unforgettable sense of humour, and his love of life. Rest in peace, George.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is fortunate to have two official languages: French and English.

Every day, young people and adults from all across the country are learning a second official language. I am happy to be learning French. I am also proud to represent the many francophones in the Newmarket and Aurora regions here in Ottawa.

Last month I had the pleasure of meeting Nancy McKeraghan, founder of the York region immersion association. She is the national chair of Canadian Parents for French, a fantastic organization that promotes bilingualism. I want to thank Nancy for her excellent work and encourage all Canadians to learn their second official language.

* * *

[English]

EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Mother's Day fast approaching,

allow me to take this opportunity to pay tribute to mine and especially thank her.

There are many words that come to mind whenever I think about her, which is every day: generosity, strength, courage, wisdom, loving, dear, incredible, and resilient.

Those who know her will agree. I mean, she had some 17 children, 54 grandchildren, 141 great-grandchildren, and 13 great-great-grandchildren, with three more on the way.

I could never imagine the joy of having us being shattered with pain as she watched helplessly the majority of her children taken away to a residential school.

I know a simple *meegwetch* will never, never be enough. I also want to say to her something she already knows,

[Member spoke in Cree]

[English]

I love you from the bottom of my heart, mommy.

* * *

● (1115)

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's Bill C-75 seeks to dramatically change the Criminal Code.

We support some of the measures in the bill, namely the one on domestic violence, because it provides better protections for victims and is harsher on criminals. It makes perfect sense.

Here ends the praise, however. The Liberal government is seeking reduced sentences for those who commit heinous crimes, including participating in the activities of a terrorist group, municipal corruption, human trafficking, forced marriage, advocating genocide, helping a prisoner of war to escape, and causing bodily harm.

Canadians want justice to be served when a crime is committed. The Liberal government is acting recklessly in seeking reduced sentences for these crimes.

That is no surprise, however, coming from a government that is poised to welcome 60 former ISIS fighters and have them take poetry classes.

* * *

[English]

WINNIPEG JETS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote hundreds of thousands of Canadians all across our great land: “Go, Jets, go.” Did we ever come through last night with a fantastic victory. After a hard-fought best-of-seven-games series, Winnipeg beat the Nashville Predators.

Oral Questions

Seven years ago, NHL hockey came back to Winnipeg, and how good we felt then. For the first time in franchise history, our beloved Jets are going to the Western Conference final, and oh, what a feeling that is.

The arena will be packed and the street party will see tens of thousands of people outside that beautiful facility. It will be a Winnipeg Whiteout like never seen before. I appreciate the players and the outstanding hockey they are playing, but I love the fans.

From coast to coast to coast, the Winnipeg Jets are Canada's hockey team in 2018. We all say, "Go, Jets, go."

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we just cannot make this ship up.

While Canadian boats are tied up at dock, the Five Nations application, unbelievably, included using a foreign vessel it had not even secured. Yesterday the Massachusetts-based owner of the vessel confirmed that he declined the offer before the application was even submitted.

With everything we know about this issue—the family connections, the Liberal Party members benefiting, the falsified Five Nations proposal—will the minister restart the process and recuse himself?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact that there is a new participant in the surf clam fishery should be no surprise to the Conservatives across the way. They started a process three years ago to accomplish the exact same thing, the big difference being that unlike the previous government, we had a robust process that included indigenous people.

We are proud that we picked the best proposal, the proposal that would benefit the greatest number of Atlantic Canadians, including indigenous partners from four Atlantic provinces and Quebec.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Holy ship, Mr. Speaker.

The decision to award the lucrative surf clam quota to Five Nations is just another example of these Liberals rewarding their friends and family.

Which Liberal MP from the Rock will call my friend Edgar and explain why his son is losing his job? Which Liberal MP from the Rock will call Grand Bank and explain why they will not fight for Newfoundland jobs?

• (1120)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the good work that our hard-working members from Newfoundland and Labrador do every single day, and in particular the member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, who has been in constant contact with the minister.

I have also been pleased to meet with the entire Newfoundland and Labrador caucus, individually and as a group, on many occasions, to work on many innovative solutions to challenges in the province. There is no doubt that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have some of the strongest federal representatives in the country.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it also has the highest unemployment rate.

The minister was aware of the glaring weaknesses in the Five Nations proposal, yet he ordered DFO to give them the licence anyway. Despite the departmental analysis pointing out the flaws, he gave it to Liberal family and friends at the expense of the community of Grand Bank.

How can his Liberal colleagues on the Rock face their constituents, knowing full well that the minister failed to apply the bid criteria fairly and in an open and transparent manner?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our decision to introduce indigenous participation is consistent with our government's commitment to developing a renewed relationship with Canada and indigenous peoples. The minister made his decision to allow for increased indigenous participation in this fishery, and we reject any claim to the contrary in the strongest of terms.

Our government is proud of this decision, and we will continue to focus on how it will directly benefit first nations communities across Atlantic Canada and in Quebec.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to the next question, I just want to remind the hon. members how it works: one person asks a question, and the other one gives a reply. What happens is we try to listen to each other respectfully. I just want to point that out for the rest of the session.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, the situation is very disturbing. The Minister of Fisheries decided to take away 25% of a fishing quota and give it to a company with close ties to the Liberal Party, a company owned by the brother of an MP, a former Liberal MP, and one of the current minister's in-laws. Clearly, that is a conflict of interest.

Just to be clear, is the minister prepared to restart the process to make sure Canadians get their money's worth?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the previous government, our government decided it was important to bring a new participant into the surf clam fishery. However, unlike the Conservatives, we remembered to include indigenous communities. We are proud of our decision, which will benefit the greatest possible number of Atlantic Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the lion's share of the contract is not going to first nations. It seems kind of strange to give such a large contract worth millions of dollars to a company that does not even have a boat. This is about fishing, after all.

Clearly, that makes no sense. Clearly, the whole process needs to be restarted so it can be done properly. Otherwise, it will be like the Liberal sponsorship scandal all over again.

Why is the government being nepotistic on this file?

[English]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, with regard to process, the Conservatives should not be surprised, as they went through the exact same process three years ago. The only thing was that they forgot to include indigenous communities.

We had a robust process. We are proud of that process, and we are proud of the decision that assured that the value from this public resource is going to benefit the most number of Atlantic Canadians, including indigenous nations in Atlantic Canada as well as Quebec.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first nations are warning Kinder Morgan stakeholders that the pipeline project carries a significant risk if it goes forward without adequate consultation and the free, prior, and informed consent of first nations. In fact, B.C. chief Judy Wilson, speaking at their AGM in Texas, told Kinder Morgan shareholders that they do not truly understand the full risks the company faces.

Will the government heed the call of first nations leaders and fully disclose all the legal risks associated with this project?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that protecting the environment and growing the economy are not mutually exclusive, as the two parties opposite would have Canadians believe. We can do both together.

The true failure of leadership here is the inability of the leader of the third party to unite his party around a project in the national interest. We will stand up for the environment, for Canadian workers, and we will get this project built.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the government's understanding of the national interest is to ignore its constitutional obligations towards indigenous peoples, then it should just say it. The reality is that the project is facing increasing opposition from first nations and environmental groups, and the government must respect section 35 of the Constitution and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Will the government finally admit that the approval process for Kinder Morgan was deeply flawed all along?

• (1125)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member

opposite that there are 43 indigenous communities that indeed have signed impact benefit agreements, 33 of which are in the province of British Columbia.

The TMX project is of vital strategic interest to Canada, and it will be built. Our government has initiated formal financial discussions with Kinder Morgan, the result of which will be to remove uncertainty overhanging the project. We are actively pursuing legislative options that will assert and reinforce the federal jurisdiction in this matter, which we know we clearly have. Protecting our environment and growing our economy are not opposing values.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two first nations chiefs from British Columbia travelled to Texas for Kinder Morgan's annual meeting. With a single presentation, they succeeded in convincing Kinder Morgan's shareholders about this project's risks for their communities, leading the shareholders to demand more information on the environmental risks and standards of the project. The federal government has been somewhat less receptive.

Why are indigenous communities getting more attention and action from Kinder Morgan's shareholders than from this government?

[English]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's recommendation was based on the participation of 400 intervenors, 1,250 commentators, and extensive scientific and technical evidence, so we went further. We extended consultations and struck a ministerial panel. The panel heard from an additional 650 Canadians at 44 public meetings. It received over 20,000 online submissions and had more than 30,000 responses to their online questionnaire. This project was the subject of the most exhaustive review of any pipeline in Canadian history.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite what the parliamentary secretary is telling us today, this project has been strongly opposed by indigenous communities from the outset. The only answer the federal government will give them is that it did historic consultations. Those consultations were purely symbolic and were rigged in advance.

What is the use of saying that its most important relationship is its relationship with indigenous communities if the government does not respect their fundamental rights under section 35 of our Constitution?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking action in creating thousands of good-paying, middle-class jobs in the energy sector.

Some New Democrats believe, as we do, that pipeline approval and climate action are not competing interests but share priorities. NDP Premier Rachel Notley said, and I quote, “We don’t have to choose between the environment and building the economy.”

NDP deputy premier Sarah Hoffman said, “We saw what happened with Conservative governments in the past, who move forward on a do-nothing approach.... we saw...that we’re getting real results.”

We have an extensive consultation process, which was conducted, and this pipeline will be built.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they would ban government advertising 90 days before an election, yet they want to apply spending limits on opposition parties almost a month before that time. For the Liberals, it is, “Do what I say and not what I do.”

Once again, I ask, will they impose the exact same restrictions on ministerial travel and government advertising that they are on parties in this newly established pre-election period?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, leading up to the last federal election, in fact, in the years of the Harper government, it spent almost a billion dollars on quasi-partisan government advertising. We changed the advertising policy for the Government of Canada to eliminate that kind of blatant partisan advertising. We also imposed on the Government of Canada the same restrictions that apply, and have applied for a long time during the writ period, to the Government of Canada for 90 days before. We have already taken action to address the issue that the Harper government did not.

● (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before going to the next question, I want to remind members that certain individuals have very nice voices that carry very well. I would ask them, when they are not up speaking, if maybe they could tone them down a bit so that when they are talking to the person next to them, which I am sure they are doing, it will not be loud enough to interfere with the person answering the question, or asking the question, for that matter.

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister can keep repeating his talking points and his attempts at spin. The fact of the matter is, the rules he referenced would only be in place after July 23 for his Liberal government. The limits for opposition parties would apply almost a month before that. This is the Liberals blatantly trying to tip the electoral scales in their favour.

Will they commit to amending their bill so that these same rules apply to Liberal government advertising and ministerial travel, as they do to opposition parties?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is conflating two different things. One is a limit on all political parties in terms of their advertising spending, and we are putting in place a pre-writ period that would apply to all political parties. The other is on government advertising, and we have already eliminated partisan government advertising. We did that about two years ago, in response to the egregious abuse of government advertising by the Harper Conservatives. We have already fixed this issue, and we are doing the right thing to be an open and transparent government.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our ad never cost \$300,000 for a single-page image. That is ridiculous.

[Translation]

Every time the Prime Minister sees his chances of winning the 2019 election crumbling, he introduces some kind of legislation seeking to make it impossible for the Canadian public or the opposition to hold him accountable or responsible for his actions. In his new bill, the Prime Minister wants to limit what political parties can do with the money that Canadians have freely given said parties.

I have a very simple question. Is he going to impose the same restrictions on his own government and his ministers regarding travel and other election activities in the lead-up to the next election campaign?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are committed to increasing Canadians’ trust and 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.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal election changes are purposely vague and leave Canadians wondering what their true motive is. The Liberals are telling young Canadians between 14 and 17 that they do not have to tell their parents they have given all their personal information away to a government agency. In fact, parental consent is explicitly stated as not required in the legislation.

Parents have the right to know what their kids have signed up for, the purpose of it, and how that information is being shared. Why are the Liberals purposely keeping parents in the dark about their children giving their personal information away?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to questions about the future electors registry, in fact, the information of young people who actually become part of that registry would not be shared with political parties. I was clear on that earlier this week.

I am surprised that the Conservatives would be opposed to the future electors registry, because at committee, they actually voted to support it.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Toronto has asked for federal support with the major increase in refugees coming to Toronto. The number of refugee claimants in the Toronto shelter system has increased to almost 40% of the total system and continues to rise. There is a strain on food banks, and the city's programs are reaching their limits. Does the Prime Minister think it is fair that Toronto has to pay for his failure?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit funny to hear the Conservatives lecture us on this, when they are the ones who slashed over \$390 million from our border security.

All I can say is that we are committed to keeping Canadians safe. Every individual who crosses the border in an irregular fashion is subject to very strict controls. In addition, we are working with our municipalities and the various settlement services to manage these fluctuations. We have a task force in place that has some ideas and options to propose regarding this aspect of settlement services. We will continue to work toward that.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we continue to see a major increase in the number of people crossing the border illegally. These queue jumpers are ending up in shelters, displacing homeless men and women who need access. How is it fair that our society's most vulnerable have to forgo shelter to make room for these refugee claimants who are fleeing the safety of the United States?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very disappointing to once again hear the opposition conflate the two systems. The asylum system is very different from our regular immigration system. They even have different leaders. Some TV shows said that the systems were the same, which is very misleading. Once again, we are working with our partners on the ground and our settlement and integration agencies. We have created a task force. We have spoken with Ontario and Quebec. I thank all of the partners that are helping us find proactive solutions to this situation.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, after meeting with representatives of more than one million citizens calling for improvements to EI sickness benefits, the minister rose in the House to say that we must take action. However, the following day, the Liberals on the committee outright rejected a motion to hear from experts and the sick, simply refusing to vote for or against the motion.

Why, once again, are the Liberals saying one thing and doing another?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and

Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that since taking office, we have made EI more accessible. We have made it more flexible, and we have made it easier to achieve working while on benefit, as well as extending some of the sick benefits to Canadians. EI is there to help Canadians get through illness. It is there to help them get through downturns in the economy. We have improved the system. We continue to focus on this issue, and we will have more to report on this in the near future.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, based on the comments we heard from some members of the House earlier this week, it is clear that the fight for women's rights is not over. It is not enough for the government to say that it believes in women's right to choose when there are still Canadian women who do not have access to abortion. Women should not be used as a political tool.

When will the government walk the talk and ensure that every Canadian woman can exercise her right to choose?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will always support a woman's right to choose, and we believe that a woman should have access to reproductive health options, no matter where she lives in this country. We recognize that access to these services varies across the country.

We have made Mifegymiso less restricted and more available on the Canadian market, and many provinces and territories are now, in fact, reimbursing for that drug. We commit to continue to examine ways to improve access to reproductive services for all Canadian women.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an ISIS terrorist who returned to Canada in the past few years recently gave an interview with *The New York Times* podcast "Caliphate".

In the podcast, Abu Huzaifa states that he worked for ISIS enforcing sharia law in Syria. He brags about getting splattered with blood while brutally lashing people who broke their laws, and he proudly admits to murdering ISIS prisoners and having the smell of blood on his hands.

Oral Questions

Why is the Prime Minister allowing these bloodthirsty terrorists to walk our streets, and when will he throw them in jail instead?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first objective of the Government of Canada in dealing with that kind of a situation is obviously arrest and prosecution. Security and police agencies of this country do an extraordinary job in identifying individuals who pose a risk to the public and take the appropriate action to make sure Canadians are safe.

The hon. gentleman knows that I cannot comment on individual cases in the House of Commons, but Canadians need to be assured that their police and security agencies are doing everything necessary to keep them safe.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone that the Prime Minister has not hesitated in giving special treatment to terrorists, such as offering classes for returning terrorists in poetry and podcasting, not to mention cheques for \$10 million.

Canadian ISIS terrorist Abu Huzaifa is reported to be freely walking the streets of Toronto even though he publicly confessed to joining a terrorist group, sadistically enforcing sharia law, and slaughtering dissidents like they were animals. Those are his own words.

Can the government confirm that this terrorist is in Canada? What is the Prime Minister doing about it?

• (1140)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no special treatment. When security and police agencies are pursuing these individuals, they use surveillance and investigations. They use criminal charges and prosecutions, peace bonds, Criminal Code listings, no-fly listings, hoisting passports, and threat-reduction measures under the CSIS Act when that is appropriate.

Our police and security agencies work very closely with their allies in the Five Eyes and the G7. CSIS, the RCMP, and CBSA make the best professional judgments about how to deal with these people and keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this individual is speaking freely to the media. The government has to know where he is. In fact, last night in the podcast, this individual described how he executed individuals by shooting them in the back of the head. He said that the people he was shooting deserved it. He said that he knew he would not “be held accountable”. He said that at least twice. He said that this was all part of his goal to becoming a front-line fighter.

Media are reporting that this individual is in Toronto right now as we speak. Could the government confirm it? If the media knows where he is, and he is talking to the *New York Post*, why is the government not doing something about this?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am charged with the

responsibility of keeping Canadians safe. Discussing operational matters on the floor of the House of Commons is exactly the opposite of keeping Canadians safe.

What I can say is that CSIS, the RCMP, and all the related security and police agencies of this country are doing their job and taking all of the steps necessary to ensure justice is enforced.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not good enough.

The minister and the Prime Minister had no problem talking about this when they were saying that these returning ISIS terrorists were welcomed back to Canada and they were going to reintegrate them and give them poetry lessons. Therefore, no. The authorities are saying there are at least 60 more walking around the country. This guy is apparently in Toronto.

Canadians deserve more answers from the government. Why is it not doing something about this despicable animal walking around the country?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can be very assured that the Government of Canada, the security agencies and police agencies of the Government of Canada are making sure that they know all of the facts they need to know and they are taking all of the measures that are necessary to keep Canadians safe. The last thing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am having a hard time hearing the answer. If I can ask everyone to keep their emotions down and maybe have some respect for the person who is speaking, that would be appreciated.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, the last thing that would ensure the safety of Canadians is to have a play-by-play commentary on security operations on the floor of the House of Commons. That, in fact, would endanger the safety of Canadians and diminish the administration of justice. We will not be conned by the abuse of the opposition.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been three months since the budget promised the feedback from pensioners, workers, and companies would be gathered, yet nothing has been done.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I am trying to get the attention of the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil and the hon. opposition House leader. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain was in the middle of a question. We will let him start over.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, it has been three months since the budget promised that feedback from pensioners, workers, and companies would be gathered, and yet nothing has been done.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Just this week, the finance minister's parliamentary secretary confirmed that there was no plan for obtaining feedback about fixing Canada's inadequate bankruptcy and insolvency laws, and no timeline for developing such a plan. Workers and retirees are tired of the government's fake news in this matter.

Is this a plan with a plan, or is this a plan with no plan, or is this a plan to make a plan? Which plan is it, and what is the plan?

• (1145)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his concern for pensioners, which we share as the government.

We understand the difficulties that employees and pensioners go through when there is a restructuring of a company. We heard that message. That is why in budget 2018, we promised to take a whole-of-government approach to look at how we might better secure the pensions of Canadians.

We have a great track record in that regard already, with changes we have made to the OAS and the CPP. We are going to continue to move forward with that promise for the benefit of Canadian pensioners.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Canada is undergoing its third Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations. This is the moment when Canada is held accountable for our human rights record.

All children have the right to evidence-based, straight, gay, and gender-affirming sex education, yet the delivery of comprehensive sexuality education in Canada often fails to meet these human rights obligations. Advocates such as Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights have been asking for improved delivery of comprehensive sexuality education for every child.

Will the government take leadership and work with the provinces to implement comprehensive sexuality education for all our children?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting and promoting human rights in Canada and abroad is a top priority for our government.

Earlier today the Minister of Justice presented Canada's third Universal Periodic Review before the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Through our work as a government to build a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples, with our commitment to gender equality, and our unwavering support of diversity and inclusion, we are working toward strengthening Canada's commitment to human rights at home. We will closely review the feedback we receive following this appearance.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, better known as NORAD, on May 12.

[*Translation*]

It is with great pride that I rise to salute the work of the Canadian Armed Forces and U.S. armed forces that created and supported this cornerstone of our North American defence relationship.

[*English*]

NORAD is critically important to the defence of our continent.

[*Translation*]

Can the Minister of National Defence tell the House how our government is supporting this now 60-year-old collaborative effort?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore, for his important work on the national defence committee.

Canada and the U.S. stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of peace and security. NORAD is a cornerstone of our defence relationship in North America. That is why NORAD's importance is highlighted in Canada's new defence policy.

I invite all members of the House to recognize the 60th anniversary of NORAD and the contributions made by Canadian and U.S. armed forces members who defend our shared continent.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Donald Trump wants to take Canadian money and Canadian jobs, and the government is helping him.

Since the Liberals took office, Canadian investment in the U.S. is up two-thirds and American investment in Canada is down by half. Now the head of the C.D. Howe think tank, which used to be headed by the finance minister, said, "For every dollar of new investment enjoyed by the average U.S. worker in 2017, a Canadian worker enjoyed a mere 59 cents."

Magna International says that high taxes and regulations will make it even harder to keep jobs in Canada.

Why will the government not get taxes down and stand up for Canadian workers instead of trying so hard to make America great again?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member that Canada is the best place to do business. It is highly competitive and we will make sure it remains competitive. Last week's A.T. Kearney study ranked Canada number two in foreign direct investment confidence. It is the highest in our history.

Oral Questions

In the last year on which we have data, we have the highest level of foreign direct investment as a share of our GDP. Our taxes are among the lowest in the OECD. We will make sure that in the long term we make the investments that the Conservatives failed to make in skilled labour, infrastructure, innovation, and science. They left us not only with \$150 billion more debt, but with a huge deficit in vision—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, foreign investment in Canada has nosedived since the government took office. In 2017, it was much lower than it was way back in 2014, and that is even before we adjust for inflation.

Higher taxes, more regulation, and stifling government interference are driving down Canadian investment. We know that when the money leaves, the jobs are soon to follow.

Why does the government not finally defend Canadian interests and Canadian jobs, stand up to Donald Trump, and put our economy first?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the Conservatives offered for a decade the lowest growth in GDP since since Mackenzie King, after they offered Canadians for a decade the lowest job creation since 1946, after they offered to Canadians the worst growth in exports since the Second World War, it is hard to take them credibly on any topic when it comes to the economy.

However, our results speak for themselves. In the last two years, the Canadian economy has created over 600,000 jobs, most of them full time. We have the fastest growth in the G7. We will continue to work for Canada's prosperity in the long term so that Canada remains competitive.

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HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Vancouver Board of Trade released a damning report saying, "If affordability and investment competitiveness are not addressed, Greater Vancouver runs the risk of becoming an international bedroom community." The Liberals' mortgage changes have made it harder for first-time homebuyers to buy a house, and that is before they hike up payroll and carbon taxes. This is making life less affordable for those who cannot even afford their rent.

Why is the government dead set on making the market simply out of reach for first-time homebuyers?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to housing, the member opposite might want to take a look at the headlines in British Columbia this morning. Yesterday the minister announced \$90 million, 2,000 new and affordable housing units. Victoria is on the verge of ending chronic homelessness as a direct result of the national housing strategy being spent into cities, creating the affordability to which the previous government turned a blind eye.

The previous government invested less money in housing than any other federal government in the history of the country, and it was taking money out of the affordable housing system. We have invested. We have spoken to those issues. We have a 10-year plan and \$40 billion. Help is on the way because the member's government was defeated.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government made an irresponsible decision about fire safety in maximum security penitentiaries like the Donnacona facility.

This government's priority should be the safety of Canadians and the workers who protect our society. This new measure endangers the lives of correctional officers.

Does the Prime Minister realize that he is jeopardizing the lives of valuable state employees by increasing response times? Why cut internal fire services? What are the lives of our penitentiary employees worth?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Correctional Service of Canada is very aware of this situation and is working assiduously with the union and with its internal resources to ensure that fire protection services and standards are more than adequate to meet the challenges they face. It is very important to make sure our public safety officers who work in the correctional system are safe and secure, as well as the people to whom they tend.

* * *

MARIJUANA

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are just weeks away from the Liberals' July 1 deadline for legalizing cannabis and Canadians are left with serious questions. The Liberals cannot explain what Canadians can expect at the U.S. border. They risk being barred from entry for life for participating in a legal act.

The AFN says the government has failed to respect first nations sovereignty or ensure the meaningful participation of indigenous communities in the cannabis market.

With time running out, when will the Liberals provide real solutions to these critical issues?

Oral Questions

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times, our government is legalizing, strictly regulating, and restricting access to cannabis with very clear policy goals in mind to do a better job of protecting our kids and keeping the profits of this illicit business out of the hands of criminals.

We have been working very extensively with community partners across Canada and around the world. We have been working with the provinces and territories in developing regulatory frameworks to help us achieve these important public purposes.

We now have a bill before the Senate and we are looking forward to its passage and royal assent so that we can begin the important work of an orderly implementation of a new regulatory regime that will help us protect our kids, protect our communities, and—

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SHIPPING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the victims in Yamachiche are angry about the Minister of Transport's lack of transparency. After my request to see the Yamachiche incident report was denied, I went through the Access to Information Act to get it. My request was postponed once, and since then I have not heard anything back. Now that five months have gone by, I have to file a complaint with the Information Commissioner to get an answer and to get the report tabled.

Seriously, what could be in this report that is making them treat it like a national defence secret?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that we are in the process of creating a secure and safe transportation system. We have invested in the Canadian Navigable Waters Act. We are aware of certain situations and we are working hard to make sure that they are addressed in a timely manner.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources claims that the Liberals will come to a financial agreement to get the Trans Mountain expansion built, even though his certitude is based on an option being discussed just 10 sitting days before the deadline.

Most Canadians oppose spending money to camouflage the Prime Minister's incompetence on the energy file, which is costing Canadians \$2 million an hour in lost revenue.

When will the Prime Minister stop abusing and misleading taxpayers and finally clear the way to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives had 10 years to build a pipeline to ship Canada's resources to new global markets. They built zero. The Conservatives had 10 years to consult indigenous and local communities. They ignored them. The Conservatives had 10 years to rally the country around the need for new pipeline capacity to end the discount on landlocked Canadian crude. They did not. The Conservatives had 10 years to address environmental concerns. They failed.

We will take no lessons from that party on how to champion resource projects.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to introduce legislation to confirm federal authority over Trans Mountain, but his natural resources minister is not sure that this legislation will ever actually be introduced. Meanwhile, the Fraser Institute has confirmed that the lack of pipelines will cost us about \$16 billion this year alone.

Is the Prime Minister making more promises he has no intention of keeping, or will he actually back up his words with legislation?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the TMX project is of vital strategic interest to Canada, and it will be built.

Our government has initiated formal financial discussions with Kinder Morgan, the results of which will be to remove uncertainty from the project. We are also actively pursuing legislative options that will assert and reinforce the federal jurisdiction in this matter, which we clearly have.

Hundreds of thousands of hard-working Canadians depend on this project being built. Protecting our environment and growing our economy are not opposing values. On the contrary, each makes the other possible.

Mr. Bob Benzen (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, media reports say the Prime Minister will not guarantee legislation he promised to re-assert federal authority over the Trans Mountain pipeline and get this project built. Legislation is now only being called an option.

With few sitting days left before Kinder Morgan's deadline, it is now clear the Prime Minister only intended his promise to mislead Canadians that he was taking action to get himself out of a jam.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is this another Liberal broken promise, and if not, then where is the legislation?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain expansion is in our national interest. That is why we approved the project, and we stand by our decision. It is not a matter of whether the pipeline will be built but how it will be built.

Oral Questions

At a time of great global trade uncertainty, the importance of Canada's role in the global energy market is bigger than individuals, projects, and provinces. We have the responsibility to ensure the stability and growth of the Canadian economy to get our resources to market, and British Columbia shares this responsibility.

We are determined to find a solution and we will act in Canada's best interests.

* * *

• (1200)

HEALTH

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Mental Health Week. According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, more than 500,000 adults in Canada take time away from work each week because of mental health distress or illness. That costs employers more than \$6 billion in productivity loss and has a significant impact on the well-being and health of employees.

It is clear that ensuring Canadians work in healthy and safe workplaces, as well as making mental health a priority, is a win-win for employees and employers. Can—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment.

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 Nepean for reminding us that this week is Mental Health Week.

Our government is focused on ensuring federally regulated workers have healthy and safe workplaces. We introduced Bill C-65, a historic piece of legislation, to put an end to harassment and sexual violence in the federal sector and here on Parliament Hill. We have also introduced the right to request flexible work arrangements and new leave provisions for workers so they can better balance work with family responsibilities.

This week and every day, we will support those struggling with mental health issues.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 31, 2015, Dwayne Demkiw was murdered. His grieving family lives in my riding of Saskatoon—Grasswood. They tell me the pain of their tragic loss is compounded by delayed justice. Their son's accused murderer is not scheduled to stand trial—get this—until 2019. The justice minister's failure to fill judicial vacancies could cost the Demkiw family the justice they deserve.

Why is the minister making the Demkiw family wait years for justice?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes great pride in the renewed judicial appointments process we implemented after being elected.

Let us be clear on the facts. Since taking office, we have appointed 175 judges across the country. In fact, 2017 was a record year, with 100 judges appointed, more than in any government in the

last two decades. As a result of this progress, we have a judiciary that includes more women, more diversity, and more judges, all of whom are contributing to a criminal justice system that will keep Canadians safe.

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, digital government can enable and empower people while improving service delivery to citizens. In Newmarket—Aurora, people are looking for services from the government that are safe, secure, and easy to use.

Could the President of the Treasury Board please update this House on the government's work to harness world-leading digital technology to benefit all Canadians?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands digital services should be based on user needs, not government processes. Earlier this year, my parliamentary secretary, the member for Vancouver Quadra, represented Canada as we signed the Digital 7 charter, joining leading digital nations from around the world in a mission to harness digital technology for the benefit of citizens. Working with our D7 partners, we are advancing the best digital principles and practices to put Canadians at the heart of digital service delivery.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been talking this week about fair elections while their own MP, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, was found to be involved in a scheme involving illegal election contributions to his campaign in a conspiracy between the Green Party and the Liberal Party.

We know that the Prime Minister removed a committee chair when he voted in this House in accordance with his conscience. After these election findings, will the Prime Minister ask the MP for Kelowna—Lake Country to step down as chair of the national defence committee?

Oral Questions

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is only one party in the House of Commons which has paid a \$250,000-fine for breaking election rules, and that is the Conservative Party. The Conservative Party and the Harper Conservatives had the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister taken to jail in ankle chains for breaking election laws. We are cleaning up this mess, we are strengthening Canada's election laws, and we are going to ensure that we respect the integrity of our electoral system.

* * *

● (1205)

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be getting a high from the disputes between Quebec City and Ottawa. We saw this again yesterday on the cannabis file. The National Assembly is unanimously calling on Ottawa to respect Quebec's independence when it comes to regulating cannabis, and this government could not care less. Today the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice made matters worse by preaching to the Quebec government in the newspapers. Come on.

Rather than fuelling the dispute, could the government show some respect and recognize that Quebec is entirely within its right to regulate within its borders?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a top priority for our government. Our proposed approach would provide provinces, territories, and municipalities with the flexibility to impose reasonable restrictions on personal cultivation should they wish to do so. However, as our minister has clearly said, there are limits to the extent to which provinces and territories can adapt rules to their circumstances. Our government remains committed to ongoing discussions with provinces to ensure a smooth implementation of federal, provincial, and territorial cannabis legislation and regulatory frameworks.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, we all know why this is called question period and not answer period. The federal government is already downloading the financial burden associated with legal cannabis, taking a huge portion of the taxes, and imposing its own deadline, so is that not enough? Apparently not. When the National Assembly asks for a modicum of respect, this government responds by sending two of its ministers to taunt us in the papers. It is sad to see my colleagues from Quebec endorsing this condescension.

Will the rest of the cabinet put Cheech and Chong in their place?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that our government has been engaged in very extensive consultation with law

enforcement and health and safety experts through our task force, but we have also been at the table with provinces and territories in a very respectful dialogue on the establishment of the regulatory frameworks that are necessary to protect the health of our citizens, to protect our children, and to displace organized crime.

That dialogue continues. It is a respectful dialogue, and we look forward to working with our provincial and territorial partners as we roll out an orderly implementation of these new regulations to protect all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec community newspaper association, which represents 81 regional newspapers back home, reacted this week to the announcement that *La Presse* is becoming a not-for-profit organization. Community newspapers such as *Le Trait d'union du Nord* have concerns about the fact that Ottawa seems more responsive to major financial groups than to our community media, who work hard with limited means to provide topnotch, essential local information. They are worried that private companies are going to end up getting their share.

Will the Minister of Heritage commit to funding Quebec's community media to ensure their survival?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague would agree that our media are facing tremendous upheaval that necessarily affects their business models. We are aware of the issue regarding the communities that are underserved. That is why in budget 2018 we allocated \$50 million to ensure that we are able to support journalism in these communities.

In fact, at the industry's request, we also announced in the same budget that our government would look at new models to allow for donations to be made to the media. In addition to all these measures, we are investing \$14 million in our media—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. That marks the end of question period for today.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship said once again this morning that the Conservative government cut the border services budget by \$350 million. This is not true.

I have a report from the Library of Parliament that says the opposite. I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to table this report.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this report?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

●(1210)

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, a report from the Canadian section of ParlAmericas respecting its participation at the ParlAmericas interparliamentary meeting “Partnerships to Transform Gender Relations”, held in Kingston, Jamaica, from January 24 to 25.

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians enjoy freedom of conscience, belief, and thought. The government's requirement that organizations applying for the Canada summer jobs program sign an attestation stating that they agree with all the policies of the Liberal government is a violation of those fundamental rights. I have heard from thousands of constituents who are upset that the government would violate these rights of Canadians. Many organizations that do wonderful work with youth through our communities were made ineligible for this program as a result of the requirement.

Therefore, I table this petition today calling on the government to remove that attestation requirement from the Canada summer jobs program and ensure that Canadians enjoy their rights to freedom of thought and belief.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from my constituents in Oshawa, who are also worried about freedom of thought and conscience. They are concerned about the Liberals' manipulation of the summer jobs program and the attestation test. In Oshawa, this primarily affects faith-based organizations that hire students in order to provide summer camps, day camps, and day programs, mostly for low-income families, which are often provided at no charge.

The petitioners are concerned that denying funding to Canadians simply because they have a belief that is different from that of the government of the day is a huge precedent. They are worried about what is next, such as discrimination in other government programs like pensions, government jobs, welfare, or charitable status.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three different petitions to present today.

The first one is on behalf of constituents who are very concerned about sex-selected abortion. A CBC documentary revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that the expecting parents can choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child is a girl. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Association of Radiologists strongly oppose the non-medical use of fetal ultrasounds. There are over 200 million girls missing worldwide, and the three deadliest words in the world are “It's a girl.”

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Canadian Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex-selected pregnancy termination.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition with regard to the Canada summer jobs program. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to defend the rights of all Canadians, regardless of whether the current Liberal government agrees with the specific views held by individual Canadians.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Prime Minister to defend the freedoms of conscience, thought, and belief, and to withdraw the attestation requirement completely for applicants to the Canada summer jobs program.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one more. This petition is with regard to Bill C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms. These individuals say that the bill does nothing to tackle firearms violence but rather adds further red tape for law-abiding firearm owners. It does not provide the resources to front-line police forces to tackle the true source of firearms violence, which is gangs and organized criminal presence.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to scrap Bill C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms, and instead devote greater resources to policing in Canada.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 1610 to 1614 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1610—**Mr. Steven Blaney:**

With regard to government aircraft being used to transport Senators between March 20, 2018, and March 24, 2018: (a) what are the details of any flight segment on a government owned aircraft in which a Senator was a passenger, including (i) date, (ii) list of passengers, (iii) origin, (iv) destination, (v) type of aircraft; and (b) what are the details of each flight segment which immediately preceded the segments in (a), including, (i) date, (ii) list of passengers, (iii) origin, (iv) destination?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 1611— **Ms. Sheri Benson:**

With regard to Canada's National Housing Strategy announced in November 2017: (a) what meetings, if any, have taken place between the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or departmental officials, including Ministerial Exempt Staff, and representatives from provincial and territorial governments, and what are the details of all meetings related to the National Housing Strategy, including (i) dates, (ii) lists of attendees, (iii) locations, (iv) agendas; (b) what meetings, if any, have taken place between the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or departmental officials, including Ministerial Exempt Staff, and representatives from municipal governments, and what are the details of all meetings related to the National Housing Strategy, including (i) dates, (ii) lists of attendees, (iii) locations, (iv) agendas; (c) which social, affordable and non-profit housing providers have received correspondence from the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary, or departmental officials, including Ministerial Exempt Staff, regarding the implementation of measures contained in the National Housing Strategy, and what are the details contained in the information disseminated, including (i) dates, (ii) senders, (iii) recipients, (iv) titles, (v) subjects, (vi) summaries, (vii) file numbers; (d) what are the names and addresses of the social, affordable and non-profit housing providers in (c); (e) what information has been provided to provincial, territorial and municipal governments regarding the details of implementing the measures announced in the National Housing Strategy, and what are the details contained in the information disseminated, including (i) dates, (ii) senders, (iii) recipients, (iv) titles, (v) subjects, (vi) summaries, (vii) file numbers; (f) what meetings, if any, have taken place between the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary or departmental officials, including Ministerial Exempt Staff, and representatives from social, affordable and non-profit housing providers, and what are the details of all meetings related to the National Housing Strategy, including (i) dates, (ii) lists of attendees, (iii) locations, (iv) agendas; and (g) if no meetings have taken place, what is the timeline for such meetings to occur for each of these groups?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1612—**Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to the contract awarded by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to Ernst & Young for \$1,001,998 for the development of an Internal Trade Barriers (ITB) Index, to be delivered on December 31, 2016: (a) was the ITB ever complete; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, how can the public access the index; (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, was the contract cancelled, and if so, why; and (d) if the contract was cancelled, or has not been fulfilled, then what specific action is the government taking to recover the money paid to Ernst & Young?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1613—**Mr. Robert Kitchen:**

With regard to the statement by the Premier of British Columbia in relation to high gas prices that he would "love to see the federal government take some leadership in this regard": (a) what specific actions is the government taking in order to lower the price of gasoline; and (b) will the government eliminate the carbon tax from gasoline in order to lower the price?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1614— **Mr. Todd Doherty:**

With regard to the awarding of the new Arctic Surf Clam licence to the Five Nations Premium Clam Company: was the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard aware that the president of the Five Nations Premium Clam Company was the brother of the Member of Parliament from Sackville-Preston-Chezetcook prior to awarding the surf clam license, and, if so, on what date did the Minister become aware?

(Return tabled)

•(1215)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my speech, I do not want to use all of my speaking time, for the sake of consistency and for symbolic reasons. I believe that the debate on Bill C-49 has gone on long enough. It is perfectly clear that the Liberal government is sticking to its guns and showing no signs of openness. It even disapproved of the motion we wanted to move this morning to agree with the two small amendments from the Senate.

I will stop here, even though I know you are not asking me to. Getting a parliamentarian to stop talking is no small feat. I will therefore do it myself for the sake of consistency. I am at the House's disposal to answer any questions about Bill C-49. If there are no questions after my speech, we will show to all those on the ground who are waiting for this bill to be passed and receive royal assent that we, on this side, are doing everything we can to be consistent, while considering both the urgent need to pass this bill and the conditions that need to be put in place for this legislation to receive royal assent as soon as possible.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières, who has done a great job on the issue of VIA Rail's high-frequency rail project in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor, just like I have in the Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier region.

To show how urgent this matter is, I will not be asking my colleague any questions. I just wanted to commend him on his speech.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, logic dictates that I cannot return an answer. I thank the member for his comments, and I dream of the day when we will be able to take the train together.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is the House ready for the question?

Hon members: Question.

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: Yea.

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 22, 2018, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the recorded division on Bill C-49, transportation modernization act, consideration of a motion respecting Senate amendments, be deferred until Tuesday, May 22, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1220)

[Translation]

ELECTION MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this time, I will use every minute and second available to me, since Bill C-76 is a very important bill for anyone who believes in democracy.

When it comes right down to it, MPs of all stripes are just advocates who decided to take their political commitment to the limit and help develop our society to the best of their ability and in keeping with their values.

Every member of the House knows how lucky he or she is to live and participate in a democracy. However, our democratic system, like many others, is far from perfect. We would hope that each and everyone of us would be able to help perfect it and that any bill that would make major changes to our entire electoral system, in whole or in part, would have not only the broadest possible consensus, but complete unanimity.

A bill that affects the very foundation of our democracy should not be a partisan bill. Still, we do have to admit that things have changed a bit ever since the Conservatives introduced Bill C-23, the Fair Elections Act, in the previous Parliament. In our search for a better democratic system, the aim should always be to strive for a consensus. However, we seem to be seeing more and more partisan games, which I believe have no place in a bill like this.

I obviously feel privileged to rise to speak on a bill as fundamental as Bill C-76. However, I unfortunately feel like I am acting in an old

movie because the government seems to be assuming it does not need a consensus. The government is using our old parliamentary system to its advantage since that system allows the political party that holds a majority in the House to bulldoze, and I do not think that is too strong a term, its agenda through, rather than striving to reach a consensus.

Even as we debate this topic, something very important is happening in Quebec City. Just months—weeks, actually—before the Quebec provincial election, four parties held a joint press conference to say that, regardless of the outcome of the next election, they all agree that the existing electoral system should no longer be used in our society.

Québec solidaire, Coalition Avenir Québec, the Parti Québécois, and the Green Party of Quebec joined forces to say that the coming provincial election should be the last to use this voting system. That is why I feel like I am in an old movie, unfortunately. Many parties have sung that tune, especially the Liberal Party during the last campaign. The party said loud and clear that this would be the last election with that voting system, which worked fine back in the day.

When this Parliament was created, it was a two-party system. In a society with two parties, one of them will, by definition, get at least 50% plus one of the votes. What could be more democratic than that? Since then, things have changed a lot in Canada and Quebec, as they have in all the other provinces and territories.

● (1225)

A plurality of political opinions and approaches emerged, which all demand representation in the House of Commons. We think that, no matter which party is in government, even if it was the NDP, it is completely inappropriate for a government that wins 39% of the popular vote to get 100% of the power in the House. This is what happened with this government, and it was the same with the previous government. There is a massive dichotomy that needs to be addressed.

The government has backtracked on this specific issue, which was a very important issue for the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party during the last election. It is clear that the Liberals have backtracked on their election promise, probably because now that they are in power, they want to continue to enjoy full control over this country's democratic institutions.

Now Bill C-76 is being rammed through at the very last minute. I would say it is being done at the eleventh hour, when the acting Chief Electoral Officer does not even know whether he will be able to implement all the different measures this bill contains in time for the next election, because the Liberals dragged their feet so long. First they dawdled with the study on what our new voting system should be. Then they ignored an overwhelming consensus in favour of a mixed proportional system, while trying to convince Canadians that there was no consensus or that the consensus was for something else. That is a funny way to put it, but it shows how desperate they were to dodge the issue.

Government Orders

Not content to have delayed this process, the Liberals also delayed the next process, which was aimed at correcting some of the stalled measures that were stuck behind those they had rejected. However, here we are at the eleventh hour, and they cannot even guarantee that all of the measures we have been discussing this morning and over the past few days will be implemented by the next election.

It is therefore fairly safe to say this has been a total failure, even though, as I will elaborate, Bill C-76 does contain a few measures that are worth studying and implementing.

We are talking about a 230-page bill that will have to be rushed through because, as I was saying, the Liberals have been behind on all counts from the very beginning.

Worse still, this very rushed bill will likely pass thanks to the majority this government holds. This means that the broad consensus that has been the tradition in this House could once again be ignored in favour of the bulldozing effect of a government majority.

After two press releases in quick succession proposing two different names, this week we learned of the appointment of a potential new chief electoral officer. The person responsible for implementing the measures in Bill C-76 has not yet been officially appointed. It is safe to say that problems are piling up.

Let us explore some of the things in this bill that deserve a closer look, such as the issue of financing. As people generally expect more transparency in the lead-up to an election, this bill proposes a number of measures in that regard. However, while promising greater transparency, the bill also raises spending limits at the same time. This means that election campaigns will become much more about money than ideas.

● (1230)

I think that there is a very broad consensus in Canada and Quebec regarding the U.S. election system, because no one wants to see money take precedence over ideas. For years now, money seems to have become increasingly more important. Canadians are well aware that there is a cost to living in a democracy. No one expects elections to be free. I will get back to public financing a bit later, since this aspect is largely missing from the bill. This was an opportunity to restore the balance that was lost under the previous Conservative government led by Mr. Harper, which completely eliminated the per-vote subsidy. I am not saying that this made for a proportional government, but at least the public financing was representative of the public vote and gave additional meaning to casting a vote.

What is more, increasing election spending limits is also problematic and feeds into the trend of making money more important than ideas. In an election campaign, I would like to see people debate ideas equitably rather than see parties inundate people with ads because the rules are not the same for everyone. Conversely, one could argue that the rules are equal for everyone since everyone has the same spending limit, but when that spending limit is at a height that not every party can achieve, then clearly there is an imbalance.

I would also like to address another problem that is widely panned and does not seem to have been resolved by Bill C-76: personal information protection. That is an issue that everyone in Canada and Quebec is concerned about now and not just when it comes to

elections, but also in daily life. Every move that is made on the web leaves a footprint and we cannot begin to imagine how much personal information we leave there.

Perhaps members have already had the experience of downloading an app on their cellphone or other device and reading the terms of service. I do not know whether this has ever happened to you, Madam Speaker, but I have tried a few times to read the terms of service, but I have rarely succeed in getting all the way to the end. The times I did manage to finish, I must admit that it was a challenge. However, just because I read the terms, does not mean that I understood them, but people always end up agreeing to the terms because they need the app in their daily lives. Once we accept the terms, we no longer know exactly how much personal information will be shared or how that information will be managed. Bill C-76 does nothing to address that issue.

I would like to quote what a few witnesses had to say about this. Teresa Scassa, the Canada research chair in information law and policy at the University of Ottawa described the solution proposed in Bill C-76 as “an almost contemptuous and entirely cosmetic quick fix designed to deflect attention from the very serious privacy issues raised by the use of personal information by political parties.”

Lori Turnbull, director of Dalhousie University's School of Public Administration and co-author of a document about the modernization of public funding published by the Public Policy Forum said, “It’s a step in the right direction, but it looks as if they were pressed for time and some big problems have been left on the table.”

● (1235)

I have used this image many times: when you take a step forward, you are not actually moving forward, you are just moving your centre of gravity. In order to move forward, you have to take at least two steps. Bill C-76 is only one step.

Funnily enough, Canada does have a privacy act. It is quite a progressive act, and it is often studied by many other countries seeking to perfect their own privacy acts and learn how a united front is needed to protect personal data in our new computer-oriented society.

However, political parties are exempt from Canada's privacy act. For example, a private company that wants to solicit customers by email has to seek their consent to store their email addresses for future correspondence. Political parties are not required to ask for consent. They can even sell the personal data they gather, which to me is an utterly absurd situation that Bill C-76, as drafted, does not address.

Government Orders

Where are the rules for increasing the number of women to a significant level? That is another issue that Bill C-76 does not resolve. In terms of women's representation in the House, we are light years away from parity, except in the NDP. Why? At the very beginning of an election campaign, the very instant the writ drops, the NDP have rules in place that require candidate nominations to be gender balanced from the get-go. If there is no parity at the starting line, how can we hope to miraculously reach parity by the finish line? We ought to thank the NDP for its efforts and make sure more women get into the House.

By voting down the bill introduced by my colleague from Burnaby South, the government missed a great opportunity to make additional strides in that regard. Bill C-76 again misses the opportunity to introduce specific measures to achieve gender parity, or at least something close to parity between 40% and 60%, by the next election. We should not have to wait decades for this. If current trends in the number of women in the House of Commons remain at the same level, it will likely take 40 or 50 years to achieve parity, and even that is not guaranteed. This is an absolutely crucial issue that has been completely overlooked in this legislation.

The bill does contain some important positive aspects, which is why, at the end of the day, I will be voting to support it at second reading, even though I may sound like I completely oppose it. I think it is important to send it to committee so that we may get some answers to relevant questions and see how we can make the most of a bill that has been reduced to the basics and does not really reform our electoral system. That is the role of all opposition members, in other words, not to simply oppose legislation but also improve it.

We do welcome the time limit for an election campaign. Having election campaigns in this era of faster travel and digital media means they can be shorter than back in the day when candidates had to travel across Canada by train, which of course took longer.

Offering a 90% refund for child care expenses is a good measure. We support that.

In closing, democracy does not belong to just the Liberals or any one party in the House. It belongs to all parties in the House of Commons.

● (1240)

I hope the next changes made to our electoral system are based on a consensus.

* * *

[English]

CUSTOMS ACT

BILL C-21—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really hoped that I would not have to utilize this, but an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-21, an act to amend the Customs Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot

a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

[Translation]

* * *

[Translation]

ELECTIONS MODERNIZATION ACT

BILL C-76—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I really hoped that I would not have to utilize this, but an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

[Translation]

ELECTIONS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Trois-Rivières's whole speech. In his introduction and conclusion, he talked about how the House would have to give unanimous consent to change the voting system. A few years ago, the Conservatives introduced the Fair Elections Act, which made changes that undermined Canadian democracy. The Conservatives will never support our attempts to reverse those changes.

Can my colleague reconcile the need to get everyone's support before doing something with the fact that the Conservatives will never support changes that would strengthen democracy in Canada?

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Allow me to clarify. Perhaps my colleague missed a comma somewhere or perhaps I was unclear, but I never talked about unanimous consent. I talked about a consensual approach.

Obviously unanimous consent is the dream, and I continue to dream about it. When we make changes to legislation as fundamental as legislation on our electoral system, I hope that we can take the time to arrive at an agreement among parties. Perhaps we can hope for the best from the Conservatives, who seem to want to present themselves in a new light since Mr. Harper left the scene. Maybe they will even abandon some of their old positions and see the merits of a new approach.

Government Orders

If unanimous consent were indeed possible, I would be delighted. However, what I was really talking about is a consensual approach that ensures that the party in power does not bulldoze the others in the interest of its own demands and its quest for a political image in order to ram through an idea without the consent of at least some of the other parties.

I would remind hon. members that at the very beginning of the process, when the possibility of changing the voting system was first discussed, it was thanks to a consensual NPD proposal accepted by the Liberals that it was agreed that a committee would be struck. It was a committee in which every MP from every party could be involved and where every member had the right to speak and vote. If an NDP proposal led to this outcome, I do not see how another NDP proposal could not reach consensus as well. Honestly, I believe that we are the masters of common sense.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have talked about the importance of making some significant changes to the elections laws. It is great that the NDP appears to be very supportive of the nature of the changes that are being brought forward.

The question I have is in relation to how that legislation gets through the House. As I am sure my friend is aware, the Conservatives do not want, and will do whatever they can to prevent, the legislation moving forward. On the other hand, the NDP seems to want to allow the Conservatives to prevent the legislation from becoming law.

How do the NDP members reconcile that? Do they want to see this legislation become law? As such, are they prepared to work with the government, even if the Conservatives choose to prevent this bill from passing, either here or in committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I said earlier that I would vote for this bill at second reading so the work could be done in committee. I think we have already seen clear indications of willingness to make it work. However, as I also said, there is room for improvement. If it turns out there is no willingness to improve the bill, I will make my position clear at third reading.

I also want to add that, when we are debating an issue as important as our voting system, being proud representatives of Canadian and Quebec voters is one thing, but making sure we know what those voters want is another. They are the primary stakeholders.

I hope that, in the course of its work, the committee will be able to travel across the country to hear what people like about this bill, what they do not like about it, and what they would like to see changed. That way, when the time comes to vote on the bill, the context will be one not of political debate in the House, but of debate among the people who speak on behalf of every riding and every region of the country represented in the House.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to participate in a portion of the cross-

country tour of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. In the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, I held a town hall that was very well received. In talking with my constituents, I realized that the Prime Minister's promises of electoral reform had raised a lot of hope.

People in our society are quite cynical about politics and our role as politicians. Electoral reform provided hope that we could move toward real democracy, a real parliamentary assembly that would reflect the choices of citizens.

The bill is being hastily presented to us because there is a deadline and everything that was done before is being set aside. Does my colleague not believe that this will only fuel the public's cynicism about how we work?

M. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and commend her for the excellent work she does in the House and especially in her riding.

At the same time, I would like to mention that I also held a town hall meeting in my riding when we were considering a complete overhaul of our voting system. Of all the town hall meetings I have held in my riding, this one about changing the electoral system had the highest rate of participation.

Clearly, cynicism in politics does not mean a lack of interest in politics. People simply believe that it will not do any good to talk to their elected representatives. People want to be involved in the electoral system. They want to implement a new voting system where their voices will unequivocally be heard. Everyone in Canada is saying that. Over 80% of the witnesses in committee and over 80% of people who attended town halls in the regions and ridings said exactly the same thing, that we need to change this archaic system. However, the Liberal government is backtracking. What causes cynicism among voters is that despite their being consulted, they still feel their voices are not being heard.

Now that it is backtracking, the government is coming up with all of these half measures, some of which are worth studying, but which fail to get to the root of what voters across Canada truly expect. It is time for the voting system to change.

• (1250)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the concerning parts we should look at in the House is the fact that so few women are participating. I really appreciate the bill the member from Burnaby brought forward, which looks at how the parties can start to address this. If we do not have women included, if we do not have women engaged as nominees, it is going to be really hard to see our numbers rise here.

I wonder if the member could talk a bit about how this legislation fails to address this most important issue in this country.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, if I can suggest a parallel, in my previous career, I taught at an institution that was an all-boys school from the time it was founded until around the 1990s. There were also all-girls schools in Trois-Rivières. Every time we had a debate on coeducation, we all hoped that might be achieved on a matter of fundamental principle, not because the pool of “recruitable” students had shrunk. We did not want our schools to become mixed just to maintain our status.

The same is true for the House of Commons. We need to take concrete action to achieve parity. I think we missed a great opportunity to do so by refusing to vote for my colleague from Burnaby South's bill imposing financial penalties, because pain leads to progress.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Don Valley East.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-76, the Elections Modernization Act. I have had the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs since I first came to this place. One of the most interesting studies we have conducted so far was the one pertaining to the recommendations of the chief electoral officer.

In the previous Parliament, I was the parliamentary assistant to the critic for democratic reform, namely, the current member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs during its study of Bill C-23, Fair Elections Act. Under the circumstances, it was an odd name, given that the Conservatives worked harder than any other party to destroy the integrity of our elections.

Under Stephen Harper's leadership, the Conservatives won three consecutive election campaigns, specifically in 2006, 2008, and 2011. The Conservatives were found guilty of electoral fraud in the 2006, 2008, and 2011 elections. Clearly, the Conservative Party of Canada has never won an election without cheating, so when the Conservatives introduced a bill on electoral integrity, they knew exactly where the gaps were.

After letting their parliamentary secretary to the prime minister be led out in handcuffs for bypassing election laws, after pleading guilty to the illegal in and out scandal, and after sacrificing a young 22-year-old scapegoat for election crimes committed by the Conservative Party to try to steal several ridings, as part of the robocall scandal, one of the first targets of the Conservative Party was the elections commissioner. They made sure that he would never have the tools he needed to conduct a real investigation.

Bill C-76 changes all that. The elections commissioner will return to the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an officer of Parliament, instead of reporting to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, where there is no officer of Parliament. Once enacted, the act will give the commissioner the power to require testimony or a written return, a power that was eliminated by the Conservatives. Why did Stephen Harper's Conservatives not want the elections commissioner to have that kind of authority, especially since he was responsible for the integrity of our elections?

Integrity is clearly not what the Conservatives were looking for, and given their reaction to this bill, their position has obviously not changed. In the debate on this bill, we keep hearing that the Conservatives have concerns about the creation of a pre-election list of young people, which could be given to political parties. They know that this list is meant for the Chief Electoral Officer and that these names will not be provided to political parties before the individuals turn 18. However, the Conservatives do not want a tool that would help inform young future voters and help them prepare to become citizens and informed voters in our democracy.

The Conservatives are afraid that young people will not vote Conservative. Instead of modernizing their old-school values, or reassessing their attitude towards women, immigrants, minorities, indigenous peoples, the environment, and science, the Conservatives would rather do everything they can to make sure that the younger generation does not have the tools it needs to participate in the democratic process. They refuse to evolve to where society is now.

During the 2011 election campaign, advance polling stations were set up on university campuses. In Guelph, the Conservatives opposed a polling station at the student centre and a young campaign volunteer, who was also a ministerial assistant on Parliament Hill was accused of attempting to steal the ballot box. Those accusations were never proven, but the incident shows how afraid the Conservatives are that young people will get involved.

The Conservatives think that giving young people the opportunity to get involved in elections, as Bill-76 proposes, is an existential threat. For the first time, millennials will outnumber baby boomers.

The Conservatives are not adapting to the new reality. They prefer to shout out “it is not a right” here in the House when we are talking about women making their own decisions about their bodies. That is shameful. Millennials, those of my generation, have had enough of this paternalistic attitude. We find that the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and his Conservatives have the same attitude.

Again in the 2011 federal election and again in the riding of Guelph, robocalls were made. These calls were bilingual and claimed to be on behalf of Elections Canada. The calls told thousands of voters that the location of their polling station had changed. The goal was to keep people from voting. The federal elections commissioner and his investigators did not have the authority to compel witnesses to testify, so the commissioner had to make agreements with those involved in this subterfuge. As a result, a young man who is unilingual and has no particular technical skills was put in jail for electoral fraud. He was the scapegoat that I mentioned earlier.

Government Orders

•(1255)

Because the investigators lacked authority, the legal process resulted in a completely ridiculous outcome. First of all, they overlooked the campaign's political adviser, who had all the necessary political and technical access and who had created software called "Move My Vote" to determine what to dispute in the 2013 electoral redistribution. This is not to mention the fact that the assistant campaign organizer worked at the store where the burner phone was sold, or the fact that the Conservative Party lawyer was present when the witness statements were taken, rather than the lawyer of the accused or the witness. That is the kind of situation the Fair Elections Act was designed to ensure by undermining the integrity of the investigation process.

However, that was not the only problem the Conservatives wanted to create or even exacerbate. One of Elections Canada's main tasks is to educate voters across Canada on the electoral system and their role in it, and those information campaigns should be entirely impartial to ensure fair elections. The Conservatives, however, had no interest in conducting public information campaigns in schools or newspapers. Voter participation is not in the Conservatives' partisan interest. They did everything they could to undermine it. In the end, voter participation was high, but that was because Canadians were fed up with the lack of integrity.

Because of that, the Conservatives used their integrity bill to change the law and take away Elections Canada's educational role. Going forward, its only role would be to say where, when, and how to vote. That is it. Things were even worse than we thought. On top of taking power away from the Chief Electoral Officer, the Conservatives wanted to muzzle him, just like they muzzled scientists to keep facts from interfering with their agenda.

In addition to dealing with the elections commissioner's workplace and power structure, Bill C-76 will resolve this ridiculous situation created by a government that had no interest at all in protecting democracy. To the Conservatives, electoral integrity meant staying in power.

Going forward, the Chief Electoral Officer will have the right to speak and to perform his rightful educational role. That is why the Conservatives are so afraid of this bill passing and will do everything they can to block it. Much like women's rights, the integrity of our elections is not something the Conservatives care about. Shame on them.

Speaking of shame, let me remind the House that the Conservatives use the Fair Elections Act to take away voters' right to use their voter information card as a piece of ID. That had an immediate and significant impact. An estimated 170,000 people lost the right to vote in 2015 because of that anti-democratic change.

The vast majority of approved pieces of ID are used to confirm a voter's home address and to confirm whether this person has the right to vote and is voting in the correct riding. The voter information card does both of those things. When voters receive their card, it means that they are obviously on the voter's list. This also means that the address is correct, or else they would not have received their card. However, this card is never enough on its own, and it must be used with another piece of ID. Anyone can vote with a health card, for

example. Without this card, someone who does not pay the household bills and who does not have a credit card or driver's license has nothing else to confirm his or her address. Once again, this was the objective of Stephen Harper's Conservatives.

If people were not going to vote Conservative, why let them vote at all? That would not help the integrity of a Conservative victory. No one wants that, so the Conservatives prevented Canadian voters from using the best piece of ID available to a large number of them. Integrity, my foot. These people do not have much integrity at all.

I am particularly proud of Bill C-76, since it will allow mail from the Chief Electoral Officer to be used as a valid piece of ID to vote. This makes sense.

The process we embarked on was long and complex. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs worked hard to study each recommendation made by the former chief electoral officer. Of the 130 specific changes in Bill C-76, 109 stem directly from the recommendations in the Chief Electoral Officer's report on the 42nd general election. Furthermore, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs studied most of the recommendations. The others were mostly technical changes requested by the Chief Electoral Officer.

I am proud to support this bill and to support a government whose vision extends beyond the next election to secure the long-term success of our country and our democracy.

•(1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member had a lot of information, because he talks fast. The government just gave notice of time allocation after only a little more than an hour of debate, so I can understand why he tried to get so much into his speech. He knew his government was going to cut off his ability to debate the bill, so I can appreciate that.

Why is the government, after only an hour of debate, giving notice of time allocation? Why are the Liberals so afraid to debate the bill? It has clearly been slapped together quickly and haphazardly so probably does need some improvements. All parties deserve the right to have a look at a 350-page omnibus bill and have the opportunity to debate it properly. Why, after only an hour, are the Liberals giving notice of time allocation to try to shut down debate and not give us those opportunities?

The member called the voter information card the best identification document. According to Elections Canada, there is an error rate on the National Register of Electors of about 16% at any given time. Almost one million of these cards were mailed out incorrectly in the last election. Why does he believe that is the best form of ID available? When there are 39 other forms of ID, it is hard to imagine he would think that somehow this error rate of one million somehow makes it the best form of ID.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, the member was there for a lot of the discussion we had at committee on the Chief Electoral Officer's report that led to the greatest portion of the bill.

Government Orders

The voter information cards are the only piece of federally issued identification that has people's names and addresses on it, and it is free to everybody. People have to pay taxes to get it. There is no other federal piece of identification that does this. It is important to have a single piece of ID that everyone has access to, and it is the one and only thing that does that.

Regarding consultation, if we want to look at the bill more closely, the best place to do it is at committee. The member for Banff—Airdrie and I can look at it in much greater detail, with somewhat less noise. We can deal with the issues one line at a time and get through it properly.

• (1305)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague is an expert in the digital world. I want to ask him about the various implementations or changes that have been made to ensure there is no foreign interference. One of them is bots. Would he comment on this?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, any time we have an electronic system that can be compromised, it is very important the election system itself is kept to a paper system and that outside interference is blocked in every possible way.

Given the nature of the Internet, and net neutrality is a whole discussion we will have in a couple of weeks, it is very hard to block or manage different traffic from different parts of the world. Every effort we can take to achieve that is extraordinarily important for the protection of our democracy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the aisle for his presentation.

One of the things that concerns me about this bill is how little time is left until the next election. Elections Canada says that the new rules should have been enacted by the end of April. However, this rather hefty, 230-page bill was not even tabled until April 30.

I have seen the government display this tendency in other matters, such as the bill on indigenous languages. The call for tenders to develop and draft that bill went out only a few days ago.

I wonder if my colleague shares my concerns.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I am not too worried on that score. Most of the recommendations have already been included in the bill, which is public. It should be passed more or less as is. We already have access to the information we need to implement it on time. I think we really can make the necessary changes before the next election.

[*English*]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-76, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other acts. The bill addresses the challenges the Conservatives created through the Fair Elections Act. What were the actual challenges? They disenfranchised voters, and they denied the use of voter information cards. This measure led to about 400,000 Canadian citizens being denied their right to vote in the 2011 election. The former chief electoral officer stated at the time

that the bill contained measures that “undermine the bill's stated purpose and will not serve Canadians well.”

Therefore, Bill C-76 proposes the following measures to make it a fairer process for Canadians to vote: the bill would make the electoral process more accessible and secure; it would modernize the administration of elections; and it would repeal the portions of the Fair Elections Act that made it harder for Canadians to vote.

I am proud to state that the Canadian electoral system is one of the strongest and most robust in the world. However, the Canada Elections Act is showing its age. Following the 2015 election, the chief electoral officer made over 130 recommendations to improve how our democracy functions. After careful study and consideration by parliamentary committees in both the House and the Senate, and with the input of experts from across Canada, our government has introduced the elections modernization act. This proposed legislation aims to bring Canada's electoral system into the 21st century.

Bill C-76 would make it easier for Canadians to vote, make elections easier to administer, and importantly, protect Canadians from third-party interference. The bill is comprehensive, but I cannot cover all the aspects in this speech. Therefore, I will focus on some key themes.

To make the system more accessible for candidates with either children or disabilities, the bill would allow candidates to pay expenses related to child care, the provision of care to another, or a candidate's own disability-related expenses out of personal funds. These expenses would be eligible for reimbursement at an increased level of 90% and would not be subject to the spending limits.

Second, Bill C-76 proposes measures to reduce barriers to participation by persons with disabilities. Why is this so important to Canadians? These measures are geared toward increasing support and assistance at the polls. As well, they would increase the accommodation of participants during political debates. Canada is a progressive country, and we would like the equal participation of all Canadians.

I had an interesting conversation with a cab driver from Croatia. His comment was, “People think that Canada has many sick people, but that is not the case. Canada allows every person with disabilities to participate actively in all aspects of life. Not so in Croatia, where people with disabilities stay at home.”

Our system may be good, but better is always possible. Therefore, through the bill, the following accommodations would be made.

First, assistance at the polls is currently only permitted for persons with physical disabilities. The amendment would make it available irrespective of the nature of the elector's disability, be it physical or intellectual.

Second, while at the polls, electors could be assisted by a person of their choosing. This is currently not possible when voting in the returning officer's office. With this amendment, people would be able to rely on the same person for assistance at the polling station.

Government Orders

Third, the act would make transfer certificates available for people with all disabilities, not just physical disabilities, irrespective of whether the polling station is accessible. The proposed amendments would also give Elections Canada a more explicit mandate to explore voting technology for the use of electors with disabilities.

The second area I would like to touch on is the Canadian Armed Forces. In his September 2016 report, the former chief electoral officer made an overall recommendation that the Canada Elections Act be reviewed to determine the best way to facilitate voting for those in the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1310)

I am proud to say that Bill C-76 would provide Canadian Armed Forces electors with greater flexibility in casting their vote, while adopting measures to guarantee the integrity of their vote. To achieve this, Canadian Armed Forces electors would be able to choose the voting method that best suits their needs. They would be permitted to receive voter information cards and to vote at advance polls. Another provision would allow a Canadian Armed Forces elector to use an alternative address for his or her place of ordinary residence for reasons of personal or operational security. I am proud that our government is supporting members of the armed forces. They make big sacrifices for our country and we need to ensure that they also have the ability to practise their right to vote.

The third area I would like to talk about is voting service modernization. The proposed legislative amendments to the Canada Elections Act would provide the Chief Electoral Officer with more flexibility to adapt processes in order to conduct elections more efficiently while strengthening the integrity of the electoral process. Some of the measures would be providing the Chief Electoral Officer with the flexibility to organize tasks at the poll in a way that accounts for local factors; allowing electors to vote at any of the tables in a polling station, rather than wait at the specific table assigned to their polling division; and opening up advance polls from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

There are many important aspects to the bill that would mitigate the risks of other things, such as foreign interference and third party influence. Currently, we are seeing the drama down south, but Canada was not immune to this in the 2011 election. In my own riding, there were investigations of robocalls and false information sending constituents to the wrong polls. The bill proposes measures that would help prevent foreign actors and wealthy interest groups from using third parties to circumvent the ban on foreign donations.

There are many points we should study, and the committee should be given the right to study the bill properly. The electoral commission has been given the power to compel testimony, lay charges, enter compliance agreements, etc. This was not available. In fact, the electoral commission was denied a lot of rights by the previous government.

There are many other progressive measures included in the bill, which my 10 minutes will not allow me to address.

Democracies are difficult, and it is our job to ensure that democracy survives and flourishes. The proposal would allow the Chief Electoral Officer more independence and the right to

undertake broad public education campaigns, which was denied by the previous government as well.

I hope the members of the House will support the bill and send it to committee for further enhancements.

● (1315)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it very rich that we are having this discussion when we just had the government House leader in here, again putting time allocation on this very important subject. The reality is that we need to have voracious debate on these issues. In my riding, North Island—Powell River, there was a lot of concern, especially around electoral reform. As we were going through the process, people came forward and talked about what this would look like. A lot of people were supportive, and a lot of people were questioning. When the Prime Minister made the announcement that this was not something we would talk about anymore in this country, people were absolutely devastated.

Here we are again, talking about the process of how we are going to elect people to this place. We have the government House leader putting time allocation again, limiting the amount of time for this place to have voracious and meaningful debate. Given the realities Canadians are seeing, does the member really feel that this is a fair and transparent process?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, the committee studied the electoral reform process, and there was no general consensus. We have to understand that if we want to get Canadians to participate, their voice has to be heard. We heard it through the electoral reform process.

However, in terms of meaningful discussions, this bill has to go to committee. In the noise of the House, people do not get the depth of what should be studied, so I would suggest that we send it to committee and let it be studied properly.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has given notice of time allocation after only one hour of debate in the House of Commons on something so important as changes to our election laws. This is the very law by which the people who sit in the House of Commons to represent their fellow citizens are elected. That was done after one hour. Does the member feel that is in any way appropriate?

There is a second part to my question. She mentioned at the beginning of her speech that she understood that as a result of the Fair Elections Act, 400,000 people were not able to vote. She said “in the 2011 election”, but I assume she meant the 2015 election, because the Fair Elections Act came after the 2011 election. However, I would like to know her source, because I have never heard that statistic and I am not aware of one single proven documented case of someone who was not able to vote. In fact, the turnout in the last election went up. It was the highest it had been in over two decades.

I know they will stand up and claim it was because voters were looking to get rid of the Harper government, but the point is that they were actually able to go and vote to do that. If that is what they were voting to do, nothing prevented them from doing that.

Government Orders

Because there are no documented cases, I would like to know where this 400,000 figure came from, because I have never heard it before.

• (1320)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, having been here longer than the hon. member, I would like to remind him that the Fair Elections Act, or the unfair elections act, was done when I was in Parliament, and I left Parliament in 2011.

Yes, there were lots of robocalls and misconstruction, but in the last election, we had lots of people participating because they wanted to get rid of the Harper government.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, what we also have to look at is the sheer timeline. The acting Chief Electoral Officer has been very clear that if any major reforms were required for the next election, they would need some meaningful legislation to implement them sooner rather than later, and at this point, the deadline has already been missed.

Here we are, again having these debates on important issues, and the government is not even meeting its promises and is certainly not meeting timelines. I would like the member to speak about why the government does not feel timelines are important.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, the 130 recommendations to improve democracy that were suggested by the Chief Electoral Officer have already been implemented into the bill, and therefore it should be sent to committee for further study.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time.

There are few things as fundamental to democracy as the integrity of its elections. Elections are the bedrock upon which many of the tenets of democracy rest, so when we discuss changes to our election laws, we are talking about changes to a cornerstone of our political system.

There are some good things in this bill. The measures to accommodate those with disabilities seem well intentioned and could do a lot of good. They would be a good way to facilitate participation in the democratic process. However, I am opposed to some other measures proposed in Bill C-76.

I would first like to discuss is the status quo and why much of it just does not deserve to be changed. I am not opposed to changing our election laws if it means real improvement. I agree with Ronald Reagan that sometimes “status quo” is Latin for “the mess we’re in”.

I have in fact supported past changes to Canada’s election laws. In 2014, our former Conservative government passed the Fair Elections Act. It made much-needed changes that helped ensure the integrity of Canadian elections, common sense changes that worked, such as showing pieces of ID in order to vote. This was a basic, logical requirement that worked.

We need to identify ourselves before boarding a plane, which I will do later today; before buying alcohol, and I am not going to do that before I get on the plane; and before buying tobacco, and soon marijuana, if the government follows through on its misguided plan. In fact, in many instances in everyday Canadian life we are required

to identify ourselves, so the question is, why does the government not believe our elections deserve to be safeguarded in the same way?

We currently have many ways to prove our identity when we go to vote. This bill would implement amendments to our voter identification rules. It would open the door to a re-implementation of the voter information card as ID. The voter information card is simply not an identification card. It is not. It provides information to the voter; it is not a means of verifying the voter’s identity.

As the member for Perth—Wellington noted yesterday, in the 2015 election 986,613 of these voter information cards had inaccurate information—I received an inaccurate one myself—were sent to the wrong address, or were not complete. I do not know why that number does not give the members opposite pause.

Maybe the members opposite do not realize how many legitimate ways there are to prove identity under the current system. We think they would remember, given that three years later they still try to blame their scandals and errors on our former government. Those seem fresh in their minds. However, I have done them the favour of compiling a list, which I am sure they will appreciate. It will refresh their memories of the ways people can prove their identity.

They can use a health card, which we all seem to have; a Canadian passport, which many have; a birth certificate, and we seem to have a lot of those; a certificate of Canadian citizenship; a citizenship card; a social insurance number card; an Indian status card; a band membership card; a Métis card; a card issued by an Inuit local authority; a Veterans Affairs health card; an old age security card; a hospital card—

An hon. member: The list goes on and on.

Mr. Martin Shields: The list goes on. People can use a medical clinic card; a label on a prescription container, and a lot of seniors have those; an identity bracelet; a blood donor card, and that is a good one; a CNIB card; a credit card or debit card; an employee card; a student identity card; a public transportation card; a library card—I have one of those, and we all should have one of those; a liquor identity card; a parolee card; a firearms licence; a licence or card issued for fishing, trapping, or hunting, which many of us have; a utility bill; a bank statement; a credit union statement; a credit card statement; a personal cheque; a government statement of benefits; a government cheque or cheque stub; a pension plan statement—

An hon. member: The list goes on and on.

Mr. Martin Shields: It is a long list that they could be using, including a residential lease; a mortgage contract; an income tax assessment; a property tax assessment; a vehicle ownership; an insurance certificate; correspondence issued by a school or college; a letter from a public curator, public guardian, or public trustee; a targeted revision form from Elections Canada to a resident of a long-term care facility; or a letter of confirmation of residence.

It is an unending list of things that could be used for identification. They are not information cards.

There are a lot of options, and voter identification ensures the integrity of our elections. It certainly has not hindered voter participation.

• (1325)

In fact, the last election had one of the highest voter turnouts in Canada's history. As members opposite repeat constantly, it was because Canadians wanted to change the government. If they got them out by record numbers, what is the issue?

More indigenous Canadians voted than ever before, as in my riding. Despite the fearmongering from members opposite, the simple fact is that record numbers of Canadians voted in the last election, under the current system with voter information cards, not voter identification cards.

Beyond the changes the bill would make to voter identification, it also targets campaign financing. Interesting timing on that one.

The Liberals failed in their plan to change our electoral system to their preferred option without a referendum. They failed in their attempt to change our parliamentary rules to silence the opposition. They were caught accepting cash for access to the Prime Minister. Now that their poll numbers are sliding a bit and their fundraising is falling considerably behind our party, they are making a last-ditch effort to change the way campaign financing works to benefit themselves.

The closer we get to the 2019 election, the more interesting tactics start to show up. They are really the same Liberals Canadians have become tired of time and again, and they will try to cover their actions with empty platitudes.

This brings to mind a quote from General Oliver P. Smith, who said, "We're not retreating, we're just advancing in a different direction." Well, it is time to call the real retreat now. Canadians will not stand for the Liberals' attempts to tilt the democratic process in their favour.

Our party may have a fundraising advantage, but that is because Canadians are sick of the Liberal government's policies. Many more Canadians are willing to contribute their hard-earned money to ensuring we replace the government in 2019.

This legislation also leaves a lot to be desired in combatting foreign influence in our elections. During the new pre-pre-writ period this legislation would establish, foreign contributions still would be allowed. Foreign money can be pumped into Canada and disseminated to numerous advocacy groups intent upon influencing our election. It is not just enough to limit direct foreign spending; it is this huge, gaping loophole that is the problem. There are still numerous allegations circulating about foreign influence in the last election.

The Tides Foundation, a radical group based out of San Francisco, is opposed to Canadian energy, yet it donated \$1.5 million to Canadian third parties in the last election year alone.

How can we even have a meaningful debate on this aspect of the bill without knowing the status of any ongoing investigations, or

Private Members' Business

without knowing if anything has been done to address foreign interference in the 2015 election? If the government were actually committed to ending foreign interference, this would have been resolved with this legislation, but it is not. The election is next year.

The bill would do our electoral process a disservice.

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): As we have hit 1:30 p.m., the hon. member will have two minutes coming to him, if he wants to take them up, and then questions the next time this topic comes up.

It being 1:30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CHÂTEAUGUAY—LACOLLE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.) moved that Bill C-377, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Châteauguay—Lacolle, be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today to debate the importance of my bill, a private member's bill, Bill C-377, for my constituents in the riding called, for now, Châteauguay—Lacolle.

This is an important step because every time I address my constituents, either when I am asked to speak on their behalf or when I knock on doors and introduce myself as the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle, I am asked why the name of the riding is still Châteauguay—Lacolle, when Lacolle is not even part of the riding.

I have already spoken at length about the reasons why and how the mistake was made in our riding name. During the last electoral boundaries readjustment in 2013, those who were in charge of correcting the riding name simply failed to do so. I am here today to correct that mistake. I was made aware of it during my nomination process for the 2015 election.

As a long-time resident of Châteauguay, I was pleased to see that our new riding included 14 other wonderful municipalities. However, I was dismayed to discover that the Lacolle in Châteauguay—Lacolle referred to the border crossing in our riding rather than the municipality of Lacolle, which is part of the neighbouring riding, Saint-Jean. How must the residents of Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, who are my constituents, have felt when they realized that the name of our federal riding did not refer to their community, but to the border crossing?

Private Members' Business

When I visited the representatives of each of our municipalities to talk about the issues of concern to them, the riding name was obviously one of them. People suggested new, more appropriate names. I would like to point out that it was the late Jacques Déglise, who was the mayor of Napierville at the time, who was the first to propose replacing “Lacolle” with “Les Jardins-de-Napierville”. Everyone quickly agreed to his suggestion. The name made sense and was meaningful to people in our region. I have already stated in the House the many reasons why the riding name should be changed to “Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville”.

However, I would like to reiterate what I think are the two most important reasons behind this choice of name. First, the RCM of Jardins-de-Napierville includes nine of the 15 municipalities in our region. They are Sainte-Clotilde, Saint-Patrice-de-Sherrington, Napierville, Saint-Cyprien-de-Napierville, Saint-Jacques-le-Mineur, Saint-Édouard, Saint-Michel, Saint-Rémi and, of course, Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle.

The residents of the other six municipalities, which are Saint-Urbain-Premier, Sainte-Martine, Mercier, Saint-Isidore, Léry, and of course Châteauguay, identify with the Grand Châteauguay region. As a result, everyone will see themselves in the name “Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville”.

• (1335)

[English]

Yes, we are proud that we enjoy the best of all worlds in our riding, both urban and rural. When I meet citizens at the door, the grocery store, or a town hall and they ask me when the name of the riding is going to be changed, I am so delighted to say that we are getting it done.

However, now it appears that we face opposition in this House to the name change my citizens so desperately want. Indeed, I was confident from the words expressed by my fellow members at the second reading stage and at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that Bill C-377 had the support of all parties in the House. Apparently, as shown by the dissenting voices of last week, that was not the case.

Now I dare hope, knowing how important it is to my constituents to see themselves in the name of our great and beautiful riding, that every member of this House will vote with me, in one voice, to say yea to the name of “Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville”.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although I plan to support my colleague's bill, I must admit that I am a bit surprised.

Approximately half the members of the House will have the privilege of introducing a private member's bill. Of all the issues of concern to the people in the riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle, the member chose the name of her riding. I must admit that surprises me, particularly since we know that Bill C-402, An Act to change the name of certain electoral districts, was passed unanimously.

Why not introduce a bill about agriculture?

Why not introduce a bill about high-speed Internet service?

Why not introduce a bill about infrastructure?

Why not introduce a bill about employment insurance?

Why not introduce a bill about temporary foreign workers?

Why did she not choose any of these issues that constituents are concerned about?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. As I said in my answers during the first and second debates, this is a concern for my constituents.

Members of the House have a variety of ways to raise the concerns and issues their constituents care about. In this case, I made this promise to my constituents and to those who supported me during and after the election campaign. As a backbencher, I asked myself whether I should follow through on my constituents' request, since I was here to represent them. This is a matter of identity and pride.

Frankly, I find these remarks a bit rich coming from the NDP, seeing as it was my predecessor, an NDP MP, who failed to take action when he should have in the previous Parliament.

[English]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her efforts in changing the name of her riding.

I have a historical question. It is quite an evocative name, “Les Jardins-de-Napierville” or “the gardens of Napierville”, and I would just ask her to elaborate as to the historical origins of that name. It is really rather nice.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. While doing research for this bill, I too wondered where the names Napierville, Saint-Cyprien-de-Napierville, and Jardins-de-Napierville came from. Interestingly, the name Jardins-de-Napierville refers to the beautiful mosaic of people in the region, who are kind of like flowers in a garden.

The name Napierville is derived from the name of an English soldier, Napier Christie Burton. The town was named Napierville in his honour. This was not a situation where residents were divided. It is important to remember what happened with the patriots in 1837 and 1838. Napierville was a gathering place for both francophones and anglophones, because one of the leaders of the patriots in Lower Canada was Wolfred Nelson.

Napierville has a fascinating history that demonstrates how much the English, the Scots, the Irish, and the Canadians and Quebeckers of the time co-operated. They also worked with the Mohawk people to fend off the Americans in the Battle of Châteauguay and to establish a democratic process in our beautiful country.

Private Members' Business

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-377, an act to change the name of the electoral district of Châteauguay—Lacolle. I have a lot of respect for the member for the riding. We served together for a period of time on the operations and estimates committee. While we did not always see eye to eye, I believe we did a lot of great work on that committee, whether it was Canada Post or other acts, so I do appreciate her work.

That being said, this bill is not something I can support. Those watching at home on CPAC are probably asking themselves what this bill is about, and why Parliament is debating this instead of important issues of the day, such as the question we discussed earlier in question period of why there is a known ISIS fighter walking free on the streets of Toronto after happily broadcasting how he murdered innocents abroad while fighting for ISIS in Syria. Why is he busy doing press conferences in Toronto instead of being in jail?

What about the constitutional crisis created by the Liberals in their poor handling of the Trans Mountain pipeline issue? Why are we not discussing that? Why are we not debating the issue of the border crisis in the member's own riding, where we have a flood of illegal immigrants coming in from the United States? I notice that over 20% of her riding is made up of seniors. Why are we not debating palliative care or seniors issues instead of this? None of that is going to be debated. The bill is solely about changing the name of the riding. Seriously, it is just a name change.

If people are at home watching CPAC right now, they are probably a bit more engaged than regular Canadians and would know that last week we passed changes to the names of other members' ridings. The Chief Government Whip had a bill passed, which has already gone through the House and is with the Senate, so that MPs can change the names of their ridings at will. They would not need a special private member's bill; they can just change the name.

My colleague from Calgary Signal Hill wants to change the name of his riding to Calgary West. He can go ahead and do it. I have joked in the past about changing the name of my riding from Edmonton West to Edmonton West Edmonton Mall, to honour West Edmonton Mall, the world's largest mall, which is in my riding. I mention that because, again, just last week we were able to change the names of over a dozen ridings, and it took the House just 60 seconds to do so. My point is that we do not need a private member's bill to change the name.

When MPs first get elected, at the beginning of the legislative period, they draw numbers for the order of introducing private members' bills. Those with low numbers get a chance to get their private members' bills heard and debated in the House. I drew a relatively low number and introduced Bill C-301, a bill that would reduce taxes for all seniors across the country. Unfortunately, the bill was shot down by the Liberals.

Because of time constraints, only about half of the members of Parliament will get their private members' bills introduced, debated, and heard in the House. Only about half of us get a bill through. The member for Châteauguay—Lacolle was lucky enough to have that,

but, instead of introducing a bill that would actually help Canada and her constituents, she wastes valuable legislative time to debate a bill to change the name of her riding, which is not even needed, because we have procedural rules to change it.

I see that today the Liberals brought closure on a bill once again, this time to limit debate on Bill C-76, where we are debating the ways we are going to conduct our elections. The Liberal bill would allow foreign funds from Tides U.S.A. to flood into Canada to alter our electoral outcomes and attack our democratic process. The bill would allow people who have not set foot in Canada for over two or three decades to still be able to vote and help decide our electoral outcomes.

We have only one hour of debate on the serious issues that affect our democracy, and yet we have just spent four hours to discuss a name change that could have been done simply with an email to the government whip. Again, I have great respect for this member, but I believe it is a great waste of Parliament's time, and it just shows once again the mixed-up priorities of the Liberal government.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-377, but I must admit I would have preferred to talk about subjects that are truly of interest to our constituents in the Montérégie region.

The consultations held by the hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle and her Liberal colleagues from the Montérégie region in February 2016 revealed that the locals have other priorities than changing the name of the riding. They are concerned about support for low-income groups, improving access to high-speed Internet, infrastructure, agriculture and protecting supply management in its entirety, trade, and the environment.

Why are we debating a riding name change today when the hon. member had the opportunity to do so during study of Bill C-402? She could have introduced a bill that truly reflects the needs of the people of the Montérégie region. In fact, I introduced a bill to combat poverty and support low-income groups, but it was defeated by the members across the way.

Private Members' Business

Does it make any sense to hold consultations to find out what matters to one's constituents, then ignore them by failing to introduce a bill or move a motion that is in line with their expectations? The answer to that question is self-evident. Nevertheless, I understand that changing a riding name is a symbolic gesture that matters to us all. That is why I will support Bill C-377.

I am especially proud to announce that, in 2019, my riding will bear a new name, Saint-Hyacinthe—Acton, a name that better reflects the reality of the riding I represent. I am sure the people of Acton Vale will identify with the new riding name more than the old one. By changing the name, I want to highlight the vitality of the people and businesses of Acton Vale. They make our wonderful riding proud. Acton Vale is so dynamic, in fact, that it was named Montérégie's industrial city of the year in 1992, a title that attracted national attention to our region.

I must admit, I am already looking forward to rising in the House in 2019 and hearing the name Saint-Hyacinthe—Acton. In partnership with the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe, we have documented the history of the name of the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to learn more about our rich history and propel us forward by proposing the new name of Saint-Hyacinthe—Acton.

I want to thank the entire team at the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe and all the volunteers who for decades now have been working hard to promote, share, and study the rich history of our town and the region of Saint-Hyacinthe. Ever mindful of innovation, the Centre d'histoire wants to acquire, process, and preserve archives, documents, and artefacts from individuals and organizations, while also sharing them.

The centre has over 500 archival holdings and collections totalling more than one linear kilometre of text documents, nearly 285,000 graphic documents, and 140,000 maps. The Centre d'histoire also has the archival holding of the Seminary of Saint-Hyacinthe, which was founded in 1811. These holdings, which include nearly 70 linear meters of textual documents and over 7,000 photographs, are an undeniable source of information on teaching. For music lovers, the Centre d'histoire also has the holdings of La Bonne Chanson, founded by Father Charles-Émile Gadbois in 1937 at the Seminary of Saint-Hyacinthe.

I thank the Centre d'histoire de Saint-Hyacinthe for all its work and dedication to our community. The people of Saint-Hyacinthe can be proud to have such a centre that really cares about preserving our collective memory.

Getting back to the name of the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, it no longer holds the same meaning as it once did. The riding I represent covers all the municipalities in the Maskoutains RCM and Acton RCM. I therefore think it is important that the riding include the name of both RCMs so that the people of Acton feel just as included as the people of Saint-Hyacinthe.

● (1350)

Since the riding was created in 1860, it has gone by the name of Saint-Hyacinthe, Saint-Hyacinthe—Rouville, Bagot, and now Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

This rich history has made me so proud to represent my constituents in Saint-Hyacinthe and Acton Vale in the House since 2015.

As I already mentioned, I look forward to rising in the House from 2019 to 2023 and to hear myself referred to proudly as the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Acton.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, soon to be known as Saint-Hyacinthe—Acton, on her speech. This is a beautiful riding name. We are all proud of our riding names, because they mean something and they are important to people. If the names were not important, ridings could be referred to as A, B, C, D, E, F, J, or one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, all the way up to 338. Riding names mean something, and that is important.

Riding names are so important that we did a bit of research. During previous Parliaments, members from this honourable House introduced 72 private member's bills to change their riding name. They did not all succeed, but they tried.

[English]

Apparently there was one that succeeded in the 38th Parliament, Bill C-304, which was put forward by a Conservative member to change the riding name West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast to what is now the longest name in our House, West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I am sure the citizens of that riding are very proud to have that name. The member at the time thought that was the most important thing for him to do with his time in the House, and that is indeed what he did.

That is really what it comes down to. I do not think we are quibbling any longer about the name of my riding. I think we are talking about how we use the time of the House. We are each here, all 338 of us, to represent our citizens, and it is the priority of our citizens that count. By the way, the citizens in my riding voted for a Liberal member of Parliament because they wanted a Liberal government to put forward the things that were most important to them.

● (1355)

[Translation]

They elected a Liberal member of Parliament. I think it took 30 years. My constituents spent a long time with people who did nothing for their riding. Now, they have a Liberal member of Parliament who works for them and who addresses their needs. I am proud to be a member of the governing party that is doing important things for my constituents. This government is taking care of the important things, like putting more money in families' pockets with the Canada child benefit.

[English]

The Canada child benefit is putting more than \$6 million a month in the pockets of our local families, which are spending it in our local economy. People on secure incomes have seen an increase. They know they have an ear in Ottawa for the concerns of most importance to them, such as social housing, an expanded employment insurance program, and parental care. They know this government cares about them.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

I do not think I need to take up any more of my colleagues' precious time here in this august chamber. I know and I think that I can count on the support of everyone here to change the name of my riding.

[*English*]

If not because hon. members may not necessarily agree with it, or how I did it or how it came to be; it is because the citizens of Châteauguay—Lacolle want to be called citizens of Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville.

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

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 22, at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 24(1) and 28(2).

(The House adjourned at 1:58 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, May 11, 2018

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Transportation Modernization Act

Ms. McKenna (for the Minister of Transport).....	19389
Motion.....	19389
Mrs. McCrimmon.....	19389
Mr. Aubin.....	19390
Mr. Albas.....	19390
Mrs. Wagantall.....	19391
Mr. Lamoureux.....	19391
Mr. Shields.....	19391
Mr. Aubin.....	19393
Mrs. Wagantall.....	19394
Mr. Lamoureux.....	19394
Mr. Carrie.....	19394
Mr. Aubin.....	19395

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Denis Grenier

Mrs. Gill.....	19396
----------------	-------

McHappy Day

Ms. Ratansi.....	19396
------------------	-------

Calgary Zoo

Mr. Benzen.....	19397
-----------------	-------

Neurofibromatosis

Mr. Fergus.....	19397
-----------------	-------

Réal Laflamme

Ms. Sansoucy.....	19397
-------------------	-------

Laurentides—Labelle

Mr. Graham.....	19397
-----------------	-------

Sandy Mitchell

Mr. O'Toole.....	19397
------------------	-------

Mother's Day

Mr. Eyking.....	19398
-----------------	-------

Allan Ling

Mr. Easter.....	19398
-----------------	-------

Rabbi of Beth Israel Synagogue

Mr. McCauley.....	19398
-------------------	-------

Lafèche Optimist Club

Mrs. Romanado.....	19398
--------------------	-------

Mental Health

Mr. Mendicino.....	19398
--------------------	-------

George Marsland

Mr. Poilievre.....	19399
--------------------	-------

Official Languages

Mr. Peterson.....	19399
-------------------	-------

Expression of Gratitude

Mr. Saganash.....	19399
-------------------	-------

Criminal Code

Mr. Deltell.....	19399
------------------	-------

Winnipeg Jets

Mr. Lamoureux.....	19399
--------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ethics

Mr. Doherty.....	19400
Mr. Beech.....	19400
Mr. Doherty.....	19400
Mr. Beech.....	19400
Mr. Doherty.....	19400
Mr. Beech.....	19400
Mr. Deltell.....	19400
Mr. Beech.....	19400
Mr. Deltell.....	19401
Mr. Beech.....	19401

Natural Resources

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	19401
Ms. Rudd.....	19401
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	19401
Ms. Rudd.....	19401

Indigenous Affairs

Mr. Saganash.....	19401
Ms. Rudd.....	19401
Mr. Saganash.....	19401
Ms. Rudd.....	19402

Democratic Reform

Mr. Richards.....	19402
Mr. Brison.....	19402
Mr. Richards.....	19402
Mr. Brison.....	19402
Mr. Clarke.....	19402
Mr. Brison.....	19402
Mr. Brassard.....	19402
Mr. Brison.....	19402

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Saroya.....	19403
Mr. Cormier.....	19403
Mr. Aboultaif.....	19403
Mr. Cormier.....	19403

Employment Insurance

Ms. Sansoucy.....	19403
Mr. Vaughan.....	19403

Justice

Ms. Sansoucy.....	19403
Mr. Blair.....	19403

Public Safety

Mr. Paul-Hus.....	19403
Mr. Goodale.....	19404

Mr. Paul-Hus	19404
Mr. Goodale	19404
Ms. Bergen	19404
Mr. Goodale	19404
Ms. Bergen	19404
Mr. Goodale	19404
Pensions	
Mr. Duvall	19404
Mr. Lametti	19405
Human Rights	
Mr. Garrison	19405
Ms. Joly	19405
National Defence	
Mr. Spengemann	19405
Mr. Sajjan	19405
Taxation	
Mr. Poilievre	19405
Mr. Lightbound	19405
Mr. Poilievre	19406
Mr. Lightbound	19406
Housing	
Mr. Albas	19406
Mr. Vaughan	19406
Public Safety	
Mr. Godin	19406
Mr. Goodale	19406
Marijuana	
Mr. Davies	19406
Mr. Blair	19407
Shipping	
Mr. Aubin	19407
Mrs. McCrimmon	19407
Natural Resources	
Mr. Schmale	19407
Ms. Rudd	19407
Mrs. Kusie	19407
Ms. Rudd	19407
Mr. Benzen	19407
Ms. Rudd	19407
Health	
Mr. Arya	19408
Mr. Cuzner	19408
Justice	
Mr. Waugh	19408
Mr. Mendicino	19408
Social Development	
Mr. Peterson	19408
Mr. Brison	19408
Democratic Reform	
Mr. O'Toole	19408
Mr. Brison	19409

Intergovernmental Relations	
Ms. Pauzé	19409
Mr. Blair	19409
Mr. Ste-Marie	19409
Mr. Blair	19409

Media Industry	
Mrs. Gill	19409
Ms. Joly	19409

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Nault	19410

Petitions	
Canada Summer Jobs Program	
Mr. Richards	19410
Mr. Carrie	19410
Sex Selection	
Mrs. Wagantall	19410
Canada Summer Jobs Program	
Mrs. Wagantall	19410
Public Safety	
Mrs. Wagantall	19410

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lamoureux	19410

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Transportation Modernization Act	
Bill C-49. Second reading	19411
Mr. Aubin	19411
Mr. Godin	19411
Division on motion deferred	19412
Motion	19412
(Motion agreed to)	19412

Election Modernization Act	
Bill C-76. Second reading	19412
Mr. Aubin	19412

Customs Act	
Bill C-21—Notice of time allocation	
Ms. Chagger	19414

Elections Modernization Act	
Bill C-76—Notice of time allocation	
Ms. Chagger	19414

Elections Modernization Act	
Bill C-76. Second reading	19414
Mr. Graham	19414
Mr. Aubin	19414
Mr. Lamoureux	19415
Ms. Sansoucy	19415
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	19415
Mr. Graham	19416
Mr. Richards	19417
Ms. Ratansi	19418
Mr. Saganash	19418
Ms. Ratansi	19418

Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River).....	19419
Mr. Richards.....	19419
Mr. Shields.....	19420

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**An Act to change the name of the electoral district of
Châteauguay—Lacolle**

Mrs. Shanahan.....	19421
--------------------	-------

Bill C-377. Third Reading.....	19421
Ms. Sansoucy.....	19422
Mr. Lametti.....	19422
Mr. McCauley.....	19423
Ms. Sansoucy.....	19423
Mrs. Shanahan.....	19424
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed) ..	19425

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